Frommer's® Portable Cayman Islands

VISIT…

TELEPHONE TIPS

To call the Cayman Islands from the States or Canada:

Dial 1, then the 345 area code, and the local number.

Operator:

Dial 0 for internal and external operator assistance.

To charge international calls from the Cayman Islands:

You can reach an operator at:

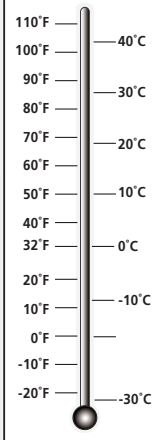
AT&T	800/225-5288
MCI	800/888-8000
Sprint	800/877-4646

Directory assistance:

Dial 411 in the Cayman Islands.

METRIC CONVERSIONS

TEMPERATURE



To convert F to C:
subtract 32 and multiply by 5/9 (0.555)
To convert C to F:
multiply by 1.8 and add 32

32˚F = 0˚C

LIQUID VOLUME

To convert..... multiply by	
U.S. gallons to liters	*3.79*
Liters to U.S. gallons	*0.26*
U.S. gallons to imperial gallons	*0.83*
Imperial gallons to U.S. gallons	*1.20*
Imperial gallons to liters	*4.55*
Liters to imperial gallons	*0.22*

1 liter = 0.26 U.S. gallon
1 U.S. gallon = 3.8 liters

DISTANCE

To convert.....multiply by	
inches to centimeters	*2.54*
centimeters to inches	*0.39*
feet to meters	*0.30*
meters to feet	*3.28*
yards to meters	*0.91*
meters to yards	*1.09*
miles to kilometers	*1.61*
kilometers to miles	*0.62*

1 ft. = 0.30 m ***1 mile = 1.6 km***
1 m = 3.3 ft. ***1 km = 0.62 mile***

WEIGHT

To convert.....multiply by	
Ounces to grams	*28.35*
Grams to ounces	*0.035*
Pounds to kilograms	*0.45*
Kilograms to pounds	*2.20*

1 ounce = 28 grams
1 pound = 0.4555 kilogram
1 gram = 0.04 ounce
1 kilogram = 2.2 pounds

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Cayman Islands

4th Edition

by Darwin Porter & Danforth Prince

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CONTENTS

LIST OF MAPS vii

1 THE BEST OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS 1

1 Frommer's Favorite Cayman Experiences 1
2 The Best Beaches 3
3 The Best Scuba-Diving Sites 3
4 The Best Snorkeling Sites 7
5 The Best Honeymoon & Wedding Accommodations 8
6 The Best Places to Get Away from It All 8
7 The Best Luxury Hotels 9
8 The Best Restaurants 10

2 PLANNING YOUR TRIP TO THE CAYMAN ISLANDS 12

1 The Islands in Brief 12
2 When to Go 17
Cayman Islands Calendar of Events 18
3 Entry Requirements 21
4 Getting There & Getting Around 24
Getting Through the Airport 28
Renting a Car 101 32
5 Money & Costs 34
The Value of the Cayman Islands Dollar vs. Other Popular Currencies 35
What Things Cost in Grand Cayman 37
6 Health 40

7 Safety 42
Safety & Security for Scuba Divers 42
8 Specialized Travel Resources 43
General Resources for Green Travel 46
9 Sustainable Tourism 46
Frommers.com: The Complete Travel Resource 48
10 Packages for the Independent Traveler 49
Ask Before You Go 50
11 Staying Connected 51
Online Traveler's Toolbox 53
12 Tips on Accommodations 54
Getting Married in the Cayman Islands 58

3 WHERE TO STAY ON GRAND CAYMAN 61

1 Hotels & Resorts 62
Family-Friendly Lodgings 67
2 Condos, Villas & Cottages 71

4 WHERE TO DINE ON GRAND CAYMAN 79

1 Restaurants by Cuisine 81
2 Expensive 83
Family-Friendly Dining 90
3 Moderate 93
Kill-Devil, the Drink of Choice 98
4 Inexpensive 99

5 BEACHES, SCUBA DIVING & OTHER OUTDOOR PURSUITS 105

1 Hitting the Beaches 106
2 Scuba Diving & Snorkeling 107
Wreck of the 10 Sails 108
Your Temporary Caymanian Pet: A Stingray 112
3 More Fun in the Surf 113

4 Other Outdoor Pursuits 116
The Booby, the Parrot, the Frigate Bird, et al. 117
5 Indoor Activities for Inclement Weather 118

6 EXPLORING GRAND CAYMAN 119

1 The Top Four Attractions 119
Stroll Through Historic George Town 120
Try to Avoid Going to Hell 123
2 Other Attractions 124
The National Flower & the National Tree 125
Driving Tour 1: George Town to Rum Point 126
Driving Tour 2: George Town to West Bay 132
3 Organized Tours 135
The Pirates of the Caribbean 136

7 SHOPPING ON GRAND CAYMAN 137

1 The Shopping Scene 137
2 Shopping: A to Z 138

8 GRAND CAYMAN AFTER DARK 147

1 The Club Scene 147
2 Bar/Restaurant Combos 149
3 Bars 150
4 The Best Pubs 151
5 Caymanian Pastime: The Pool Hall Bar 153
6 Other Diversions 153

9 CAYMAN BRAC 155

1 Essentials 156
Fast Facts: Cayman Brac 157
2 Where to Stay 158
3 Where to Dine 163
4 Beaches, Scuba Diving & Other Outdoor Pursuits 165

5 Shopping 170
6 Cayman Brac After Dark 170

10 LITTLE CAYMAN 172

1 Essentials 173
Fast Facts: Little Cayman 174
2 Where to Stay 175
3 Where to Dine 179
4 Beaches, Scuba Diving & Other Outdoor Pursuits 181
5 Exploring the Island 184
6 Shopping 185
7 Little Cayman After Dark 185

11 FAST FACTS 186

1 Fast Facts: Cayman Islands 186
2 Airline, Hotel & Car Rental Websites 191

INDEX 193

General Index 193
Accommodations Index 203
Restaurant Index 204

LIST OF MAPS

The Best of the Cayman Islands 4
Cayman Islands Factoids... 14
Where to Stay on Grand Cayman 63
Where to Stay on Seven Mile Beach 65
Where to Dine on Seven Mile Beach 85
Where to Dine in George Town 87
Where to Dine on Grand Cayman 89
What to See & Do on Grand Cayman 121
Driving Tour 1: George Town to Rum Point 127
Driving Tour 2: George Town to West Bay 133
Where to Stay & Dine on Cayman Brac 159
Where to Stay & Dine on Little Cayman 177

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

As a team of veteran travel writers, **Darwin Porter** and **Danforth Prince** have produced numerous titles for Frommer's which have included Italy, France, the Caribbean, England, Austria, and Germany. A film critic, columnist, and broadcaster, Porter is also a Hollywood biographer. Recent releases by Porter include *Brando Unzipped,* documenting the private life of Marlon Brando, and *Jacko: His Rise and Fall,* the first complete biography ever written on the tumultuous life of Michael Jackson. Prince was formerly employed by the Paris bureau of the *New York Times* and is today the president of Blood Moon Productions and other media-related firms. Porter and Prince's latest non-travel-related venture, jointly co-authored and published in 2008 by Blood Moon, is *Hollywood Babylon—It's Back!,* which one critic described as "the hottest compilation of inter-generational scandal in the history of Hollywood."

HOW TO CONTACT US

In researching this book, we discovered many wonderful places—hotels, restaurants, shops, and more. We're sure you'll find others. Please tell us about them, so we can share the information with your fellow travelers in upcoming editions. If you were disappointed with a recommendation, we'd love to know that, too. Please write to:

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AN ADDITIONAL NOTE

Please be advised that travel information is subject to change at any time—and this is especially true of prices. We therefore suggest that you write or call ahead for confirmation when making your travel plans. The authors, editors, and publisher cannot be held responsible for the experiences of readers while traveling. Your safety is important to us, however, so we encourage you to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings. Keep a close eye on cameras, purses, and wallets, all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets.

FROMMER'S STAR RATINGS, ICONS & ABBREVIATIONS

Every hotel, restaurant, and attraction listing in this guide has been ranked for quality, value, service, amenities, and special features using a **star-rating system.** In country, state, and regional guides, we also rate towns and regions to help you narrow down your choices and budget your time accordingly. Hotels and restaurants are rated on a scale of zero (recommended) to three stars (exceptional). Attractions, shopping, nightlife, towns, and regions are rated according to the following scale: zero stars (recommended), one star (highly recommended), two stars (very highly recommended), and three stars (must-see).

In addition to the star-rating system, we also use **seven feature icons** that point you to the great deals, in-the-know advice, and unique experiences that separate travelers from tourists. Throughout the book, look for:

Finds	Special finds—those places only insiders know about
Fun Facts	Fun facts—details that make travelers more informed and their trips more fun
Kids	Best bets for kids, and advice for the whole family
Moments	Special moments—those experiences that memories are made of
Overrated	Places or experiences not worth your time or money
Tips	Insider tips—great ways to save time and money
Value	Great values—where to get the best deals

The following **abbreviations** are used for credit cards:

AE American Express **DISC** Discover **V** Visa
DC Diners Club **MC** MasterCard

TRAVEL RESOURCES AT FROMMERS.COM

Frommer's travel resources don't end with this guide. Frommer's website, **www.frommers.com**, has travel information on more than 4,000 destinations. We update features regularly, giving you access to the most current trip-planning information and the best air fare, lodging, and car-rental bargains. You can also listen to podcasts, connect with other Frommers.com members through our active-reader forums, share your travel photos, read blogs from guidebook editors and fellow travelers, and much more.

1

The Best of the Cayman Islands

In the Cayman Islands, you can hike through untouched woodland, pay a visit to colorful reefs and fish on a scuba-diving or snorkeling trip, or plunk yourself down on the islands' white sands with a frosted drink in hand. You can rent an isolated West Indian cottage or stay in a luxurious resort. You can chow down on fresh fried fish at a waterside shack or indulge in a world-class five-course meal. Whatever your tastes and budget, in this chapter we'll guide you to the best that the Cayman Islands have to offer.

1 FROMMER'S FAVORITE CAYMAN EXPERIENCES

- **"Petting" the Stingrays:** Called the "world's best 4m (13-ft.) dive site," Stingray City lies in Grand Cayman's North Sound. Adventuresome snorkelers and divers can swim among, pet, and feed 30 to 50 graceful, "tame" Atlantic Southern stingrays. Stingray City is a phenomenon unique to the Cayman Islands, but don't expect to find us there. See "Scuba Diving & Snorkeling" in chapter 5.
- **Scuba Diving in the Cayman Islands:** Rainbow-hued marine life and an incredible variety of dive sites, including ship wrecks and dramatic "wall dives," combine to make the Cayman Islands perhaps the single most popular spot for scuba diving in the Western Hemisphere. Many sites lie offshore of Grand Cayman, but the archipelago's smaller islands, Little Cayman and Cayman Brac, are also filled with pristine reefs and dramatic drop-offs, including Little Cayman's Bloody Bay Wall, hailed as the most sensational wall dive in the Caribbean. See "Scuba Diving & Snorkeling" in chapter 5, "Scuba Diving" in chapter 9, and "Scuba Diving & Snorkeling" in chapter 10.
- **Exploring Deep into the Wild Interior:** On Grand Cayman, you can walk back in time on the 3.2km (2-mile) Mastic Trail, which runs through the Caribbean's best example of a dry subtropical forest. A wide variety of plants and animals unique to the Cayman Islands live in this area, where the woodland has evolved undisturbed for 2 million years. See p. 124.

- **Down into the Deep in a Submarine:** Atlantis Adventures and its competitor, Nautilus, will take you under the sea to explore the vivid, colorful life of one of the most incredible marine habitats on the planet, all without getting wet. The companies cover the full spectrum of submarine experiences, from trips to the teeming shallow reefs and shipwrecks of George Town Harbour, to voyages to coral canyons at 30m (98 ft.). You can even take a trip to the Cayman Wall at 300m (984 ft.). See p. 114.
- **Spending the Day on Seven Mile Beach:** This strip of golden sand, running the length of the western side of Grand Cayman, is what makes this island a year-round destination. Soft sands, roped-off swimming sections, and casuarina shade trees make for perfect Caribbean beachfront charm. For jogging, sunning, swimming, windsurfing, kayaking, water-skiing, parasailing, snorkeling, scuba diving, or just plain walking, this is one of the greatest beachfronts in the Western Hemisphere, complemented by a string of hotels, restaurants, and shops along the entire length of the beach. See p. 106.
- **Visiting the World's Only Green Sea Turtle Farm:** The Cayman Turtle Farm was created to provide a safe habitat for the endangered green sea turtle. Thousands of these magnificent creatures are hatched and raised here. See p. 119.
- **Going Fishin':** Fishing is the "national sport" of the Cayman Islands—a tremendously popular pastime for locals and visitors alike. The catches (which can turn up as close as .4km/a quarter-mile offshore on all three islands) include such prizes as blue marlin, wahoo, dolphin (mahimahi), tuna, and other species. Bonefishermen will be lured to the flats off Little Cayman. See p. 116 for fishing off Grand Cayman, p. 182 for Little Cayman fishing, and p. 167 for Cayman Brac fishing.
- **Snorkeling in an Underwater Paradise:** Great snorkeling, which can be fun for the entire family, is found close to the shore of all three islands. From encounters with the rays of Stingray City to explorations of ship wrecks, underwater thrills galore await you. See "The Best Snorkeling Sites," later in this chapter, for our favorite sites.
- **Escaping to Little Cayman:** As much as we like to visit Grand Cayman, we also like to escape from it sometimes. If you want a place where the only footprints in the sand will be yours, head for Little Cayman, a tiny, cigar-shaped island only 16km (10 miles) long. Once here, you'll enjoy deserted, pearl-white-sand beaches; spectacular bonefishing; barbecue cookouts under the stars; and some of the best scuba diving and snorkeling in the world. See chapter 10.

- **Boating Over to Owen Island for a Picnic:** Our favorite picnic spot in all of the Caribbean is Owen Island, 180m (590 ft.) off the shores of Little Cayman. Easily accessible by rowboat, these 4.4 hectares (11 acres) are pure bliss. You'll find a white sand beach and a blue lagoon. See p. 181.

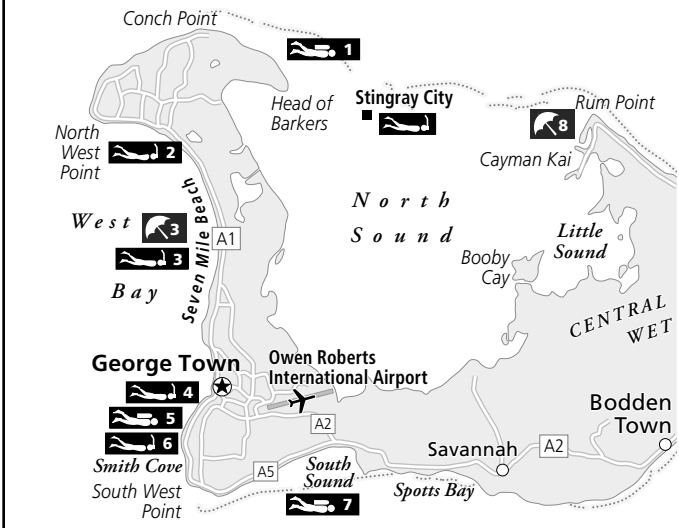
2 THE BEST BEACHES

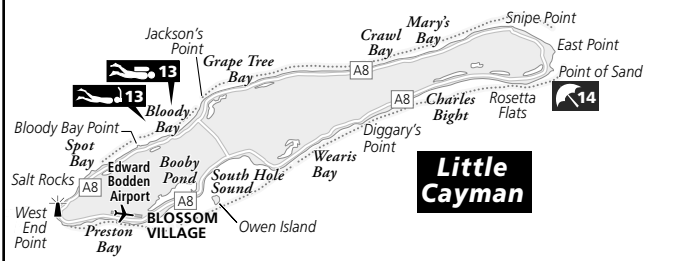
- **Seven Mile Beach:** Did we already mention that Caribbean beaches don't get much better than Seven Mile Beach on Grand Cayman? The powdery sands here are free of litter and souvenir hawkers, and they're set against a backdrop of resorts, beach bars, restaurants, and shops. This is the Miami Beach of the Caribbean. See p. 106.
- **Rum Point:** This secluded white sand beach is 40km (25 miles) north of George Town, on Grand Cayman. Although it cannot compare to spectacular Seven Mile Beach, this excellent tree-shaded beach has tranquil, clear waters that teem with rainbow-hued fish, making it great for snorkeling. See p. 107.
- **Southwest Coast of Cayman Brac:** A series of nearly deserted white sand beaches on Cayman Brac is anchored on the southwest coast. These are small and relatively undiscovered beaches that remind many visitors of the Caribbean "the way it used to be." Book into the Brac Reef Beach Resort and you'll be able to walk straight from your room to the sands. See p. 165.
- **Point of Sand:** At the southeastern tip of Little Cayman is the best beach on the island, with a strip of luminescent pink sand. Point of Sand is also ideal for snorkeling. On many weekdays, you'll have much of the beach to yourself. See p. 181.

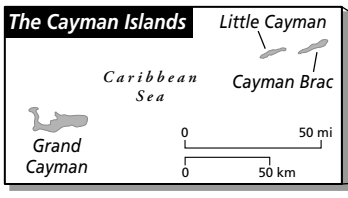
3 THE BEST SCUBA-DIVING SITES

The Cayman Islands are an ideal destination for scuba divers of all experience and skill levels. We've listed our favorite dive sites below, but as the Caymans are surrounded by corals reefs, the options are nearly boundless. Throughout this book, you'll find listings of recommended dive operators who will be able to advise on which sites are right for you.

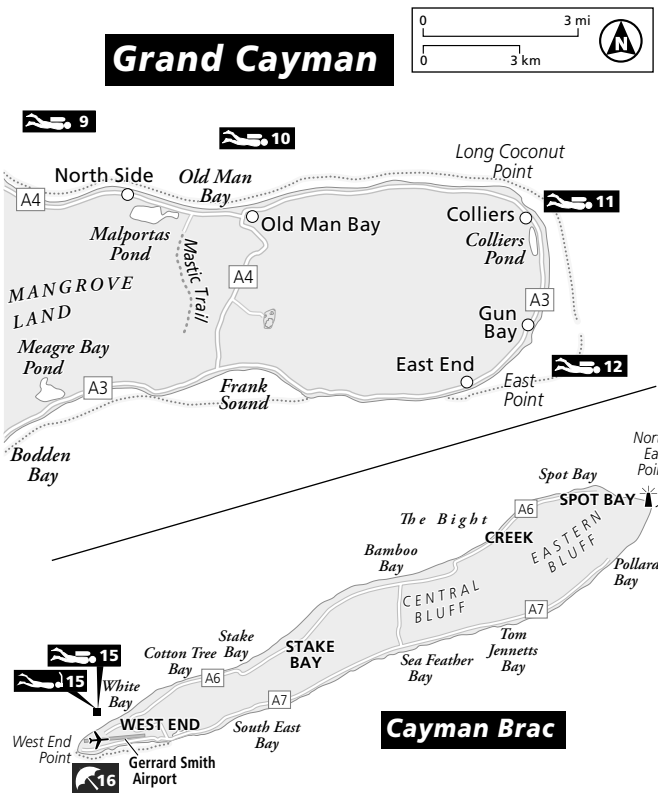
- **Eden Rock Dive Center:** One of Grand Cayman's most popular dive sites, this area has two alluring reefs, Eden Rock and Devil's Grotto, that are close to shore at a depth of 14m (46 ft.).You'll find


Conch Point
1
Head of Barkers
Stingray City
Rum Point
8
North West Point
2
Cayman Kai
North Sound
West Bay
3
3
Seven Mile Beach
A1
Little Sound
Booby Cay
CENTRAL
WET
George Town
Owen Roberts International Airport
4
5
6
A2
Bodden Town
Smith Cove
South West Point
A5
South Sound
Savannah
A2
Spotts Bay
7


Jackson's Point
Grape Tree Bay
Crawl Bay
Mary's Bay
Snipe Point
East Point
Point of Sand
13
13
Bloody Bay
A8
Charles Bight
Rosetta Flats
14
Bloody Bay Point
Spot Bay
Diggary's Point
Little Cayman
Salt Rocks
A8
Edward Bodden Airport
Booby Pond
Wearis Bay
South Hole Sound
West End Point
A8
BLOSSOM VILLAGE
Preston Bay
Owen Island


The Cayman Islands
Little Cayman
Caribbean Sea
Cayman Brac
Grand Cayman
0
50 mi
0
50 km

0
300 mi
0
300 km
UNITED STATES
Miami
Gulf of Mexico
Key West
BAHAMAS
Havana
CUBA
Cancun
MEXICO
Caribbean Sea
JAMAICA



Airport
Lighthouse
Reef

THE BEST BEACHES

Point of Sand **14**
Rum Point **8**
Seven Mile Beach **3**
Southwest Coast of Cayman Brac **16**

THE BEST SNORKELING SITES

Bloody Bay Wall **13**
Cemetery Beach **2**
Devil's Grotto **6**
Seven Mile Beach **3**
The Wreck of the *Cali* **4**
The Wreck of the *Captain Keith Tibbetts* **15**

THE BEST SCUBA-DIVING SITES

Bloody Bay Marine Park **13**
Eden Rock Dive Center **5**
Grand Canyon **9**
Japanese Gardens **7**
Julie's Wall **10**
The Maze **12**
Snapper Hole **11**
Tarpon Alley **1**
The Wreck of the *Captain Keith Tibbetts* **15**

caves, grottos, and a miniwall, plus tunnels that rise up 12m (39 ft.) from the sand. Divers and snorkelers are treated to an array of colorful fish, sea fans, and sponges, along with an "in-residence" family of tarpon.

- **The Maze:** Located in Grand Cayman's South Channel, close to the famous Wreck of the Ten Sails, is this honeycomb of deep, narrow coral ravines that evoke a maze. Sponges and soft corals greet you at every turn, along with such creatures as Caribbean reef sharks, green turtles, and spotted eagle rays. Depths reach from 17 to 30m (56–98 ft.).
- **Snapper Hole:** A favorite with beginners and one of the top dive sites in the islands, this network of chutes, tunnels, and caverns at a depth of 20m (66 ft.) is located off Grand Cayman, southeast of Morritt's Tortuga Club. Tarpon occupy many of the caverns and tunnels, and schools of snapper swim by, sharing the water with nurse or black-tip sharks, eagle rays, and other denizens of the deep. Visibility is in excess of 24m (79 ft.).
- **Tarpon Alley:** Near Stingray City, this Grand Cayman wall is at a depth of 15 to 24m (49–79 ft.). It's named for the many (at least 100) tarpon who find food and refuge in the reef. Many of these "silver kings" are 1m (3¼ ft.) long, and some can reach a length of 1.2m (4 ft.). Hawksbill turtles also inhabit the site, as do barracuda, stingrays, yellowtail snapper, and other creatures. Because of its drop-offs and canyons, Tarpon Alley is a favorite with underwater photographers.
- **Julie's Wall:** Opposite the town of Old Man Bay on Grand Cayman, this exposed and rather windy, intermediate-level dive site has excellent underwater visibility at depths ranging from 20 to 30m (66–98 ft.). The wall here is home to stunning black coral formations, as well as stingrays and other marine life.
- **Grand Canyon** (also called White Stroke Canyon and 3-Bs Wall): Along the North Wall, off Grand Cayman, lies this undersea canyon. At a depth of 15 to 30m (49–98 ft.), two mammoth coral buttresses form a wide recess, which is filled with a variety of sponges and soft corals. Visibility is usually some 30m (98 ft.). Bermuda chub, purple Creole wrasse, spotted eagle rays, and green sea turtles inhabit the site.
- **Japanese Gardens:** This site is located inside Grand Cayman's South Wall drop-off, with depths of 9 to 15m (30–49 ft.). It has a maze of passageways and is known for its schools of Bermuda chub and the tiny, bright blue "juvenile fish" that hide in its dramatic strands of elkhorn coral.
- **The Wreck of the *Captain Keith Tibbetts:*** A 5- to 20-minute boat ride from most resorts on Cayman Brac, the *Captain Keith*

Tibbetts is one of the most famous wreck dives in the Caribbean. A Russian frigate sent over from Cuba, it was deliberately sunk in 1996 on the north side of Cayman Brac at a depth ranging from 17 to 34m (55–110 ft.). The wreck is home to barracudas, green moray eels, big groupers, scorpionfish, and an array of other tropical species. The coral formations, including beautiful yellow tube sponges, are stunning. See p. 166.

- **Bloody Bay Marine Park:** This dive site, located off Little Cayman, is one of the best in the Caribbean. It roughly covers the area between Jackson Point in the east and Spot Bay to the west, and encompasses 22 of this little island's dive sites. Many of the dives here are deep, as the reef plummets to 1,800m (5,904 ft.). However, the reef starts at 6m (20 ft.), so shallower dives are possible. Grouper, horse-eye jacks, triggerfish, and many small tropical fish call this area home. See p. 181.

4 THE BEST SNORKELING SITES

Several of the beaches and dive sites around the Cayman Islands also happen to be great spots for snorkeling. Below is a list of our favorites, including sites not listed elsewhere in this guide.

- **The Wreck of the *Cali*:** Wreck sites aren't just for scuba divers. Just a short swim from George Town's shores you will find the wreck of the *Cali,* sitting in shallow water and an easy snorkeling adventure. The wreck rests in 6m (20 ft.) of calm waters about 30m (98 ft.) offshore. Built in 1944, the *Cali* was a 66m (217-ft.) masted schooner that was labeled as a shipping hazard in 1957. It was blown up by the British Corps of Army Engineers and has since been a popular snorkeling site.
- **Seven Mile Beach & Cemetery Beach:** Many snorkelers staying on Grand Cayman snorkel off Seven Mile Beach because it's so convenient to many of the resorts and rented villas and condos, and colorful reefs lie right offshore. The snorkeling near the Marriott and Westin resorts is excellent. To the north, Cemetery Reef and its public beach are good spots for underwater exploration. At Cemetery Reef we've seen shoals of parrotfish and sergeant majors and even the elusive reef shark. See p. 106.
- **Devil's Grotto:** Just south of Eden Rock, this popular Grand Cayman snorkeling site is a mere 45m (148 ft.) off Parrot's Landing Rock. You can wind through a series of long and intricate tunnels here. The fun begins at a depth of 3m (10 ft.). Tarpon are often seen at rest during daylight hours.

- **The Wreck of the *Captain Keith Tibbetts:*** Cayman Brac's celebrated diving site, a Russian frigate wreck, is also loved by snorkelers. See p. 166.
- **Bloody Bay Wall:** Little Cayman's fantastic diving attraction boasts some excellent spots for snorkelers who frequent many of the island's shallower dive sites. The best snorkel site is Jackson Point. Other interesting sites include the amusingly named Nancy's Cup of Tea, lying just west of Jackson Point. For more details, see p. 181.

5 THE BEST HONEYMOON & WEDDING ACCOMMODATIONS

- **The Westin Casuarina Resort & Spa,** Grand Cayman (✆ **800/503-7800** Honeymoon Concierge or 800/937-8461; www.westincasuarina.com), on Seven Mile Beach, with landscaped grounds and romantic suites, offers one of the best honeymoon packages on Grand Cayman. The deal is for a 4-night minimum stay and includes a bottle of champagne, a 1-day jeep rental, a couples massage, and a sunset cruise on a ferry to Rum Point. This package costs from US$2,132 to US$2,939 per couple year-round. See p. 64.
- The **Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort,** Grand Cayman (✆ **888/236-2427;** www.marriott.com), with its enviable location on Seven Mile Beach, doesn't offer honeymoon packages, but it caters to honeymooners nonetheless. The hotel can make all wedding arrangements for you if given sufficient notice. The price depends on your requirements. See p. 66.
- **Grand Cayman Beach Suites,** Grand Cayman (✆ **800/949-1234;** www.grand-cayman-beach-suites.com), is the place to go if you're looking to spend your honeymoon in the most posh, luxurious hotel on Grand Cayman (complete with a first-rate golf course). The hotel staff is experienced at making wedding plans. See p. 62.

6 THE BEST PLACES TO GET AWAY FROM IT ALL

- **Cobalt Coast Resort and Suites,** Grand Cayman (✆ **888/946-5656;** www.cobaltcoast.com or www.divetech.com), is the best resort for divers on Grand Cayman (and great for nondivers as

well). Opening onto Boatswains Bay, in the residential community of West Bay, it is a charming, self-contained community that houses its guests in a series of well-furnished accommodations, including oceanfront suites. See p. 67.

- **The Retreat at Rum Point,** Grand Cayman (✆ **866/947-9135;** www.theretreat.com.ky), opens onto a white sand beach located on an isolated, tranquil point. Although this condo complex is only 35 minutes by car from the bustle of George Town, it seems worlds away. See p. 76.
- **Morritt's Tortuga Club and Grand Resort,** Grand Cayman (✆ **800/447-0309;** www.morritts.com), is located on 3 hectares (7½ acres) bordering a beach at the eastern end of the island. The area around the condos offers some of Grand Cayman's best diving, but you need not be a diver to enjoy this secluded resort. See p. 75.
- **The Reef Resort,** Grand Cayman (✆ **800/232-0541;** www.royalreef.com), a timeshare/condo complex, is situated on the remote East End, a 32km (20-mile) drive from the airport and a 45-minute trip from George Town. The large, luxurious beachfront units, each boasting a balcony, overlook serene Colliers Bay. See p. 76.
- **Walton's Mango Manor,** Cayman Brac (✆ **345/948-0518;** www.waltonsmangomanor.com), set within a lush garden on 1.2 hectares (3 acres) of land on Cayman Brac's remote north shore, is an excellent B&B. See p. 160.
- **Almond Beach Hideaways,** Cayman Brac (✆ **866/222-8528;** www.almondbeachhideaways.com), features two-bedroom villas that open onto a beachfront of white sand and coconut palms, guaranteeing tranquillity and privacy. See p. 160.
- **Little Cayman Cottage,** Little Cayman (✆ **800/235-5888;** www.caymanvillas.com), is a two-bedroom cottage set on a white sandy beach—the perfect hideaway. You'll have an instant home here, with room enough for six of your closest friends and family (or whomever you choose), plus a fully equipped kitchen. The only sound you'll hear is the pounding surf. See p. 176.

7 THE BEST LUXURY HOTELS

- **The Ritz-Carlton,** Grand Cayman (✆ **800/241-3333;** www.ritzcarlton.com). At long last, and after many delays, Grand Cayman has a Ritz-Carlton worthy of its plush name. Set on both sides of a boulevard next to Seven Mile Beach, it feels like Europe in the tropics with a golf course. Only problem is, it's very expensive. See p. 62.

- **Grand Cayman Beach Suites,** Grand Cayman (✆ **800/949-1234;** www.grand-cayman-beach-suites.com). This luxurious and stylish retreat opens onto one of the most beautiful stretches of Seven Mile Beach, 3km (2 miles) north of George Town. For golfers, the excellent golf course makes this the obvious lodging choice. See p. 62.
- **The Westin Casuarina Resort & Spa,** Grand Cayman (✆ **800/937-8461;** www.westincasuarina.com), also opens onto the sands of Seven Mile Beach and is set on its own luxurious grounds. This resort is so complete that some visitors virtually never leave the complex until it's time to catch their plane back home. With excellent facilities for watersports, golf, diving, and dining, it is among the top three resorts in the entire Cayman archipelago. See p. 64.
- **The Club at Little Cayman,** Little Cayman (✆ **345/948-1033;** www.theclubatlittlecayman.com), stands on lush grounds and affords the most luxurious living on this sparsely populated island. The private villas here open onto a beach, and the complex has the island's finest pool. See p. 175.

8 THE BEST RESTAURANTS

- **The Cracked Conch,** Grand Cayman (✆ **345/945-5217**), is a longtime favorite and now better than ever after its post–Hurricane Ivan reincarnation, with vastly improved seafood and international cuisine. Of course, conch is the specialty, but you can also order the elusive turtle steak, served here because the endangered turtles are commercially raised on the island and not harvested at sea. See p. 84.
- **Kaibo Beach Bar & Grill,** Grand Cayman (✆ **345/947-9975**), located at the Kaibo Yacht Club, serves superb international cuisine, often focusing on recipes from Louisiana. The fun, exciting Kaibo Beach Bar has a Polynesian setting that features flaming torches and multilevel terraces. The "Upstairs" restaurant is the gem here for dining and evokes a cross between a pagan temple and a tree house. See p. 88.
- **Grand Old House,** Grand Cayman (✆ **345/949-9333**), is set in a converted plantation house south of George Town. The restaurant combines American, Caribbean, and Pacific Rim cuisine. Each dish is prepared exceedingly well, especially the fresh seafood and lobster. See p. 86.

- **Hemingway's,** Grand Cayman (✆ **345/949-1234**), is known for serving the finest seafood on the island, along with first-rate international cuisine. It features one of the most imaginative menus on Grand Cayman. Don't miss the catch of the day. See p. 87.
- **The Reef Grill at Royal Palms,** Grand Cayman (✆ **345/945-6358**), nestled in the Royal Palms at the heart of Seven Mile Beach, is one of our favorites for seafood. From the memorable chowder to the lobster-filled ravioli, the dishes here are prepared with fresh, top-quality ingredients and plenty of skill. See p. 91.
- **Captain's Table,** Cayman Brac (✆ **345/948-1418**), at the Brac Caribbean Beach Resort, is the most exquisite place to eat on Cayman Brac. It serves the finest quality American cuisine on the island, prepared with a deft hand. Enjoy your conch fritters and catch of the day outside by the pool. See p. 164.
- **Pirates Point Resort Restaurant,** Little Cayman (✆ **345/948-1010;** www.piratespointresort.com/Food.html). The best restaurant on Little Cayman, it serves international cuisine created by the restaurant's owner and manager, Gladys Howard, a graduate of Cordon Bleu in Paris. Try the smoked salmon cheesecake; you won't regret it. See p. 180.

2

Planning Your Trip to the Cayman Islands

This chapter is devoted to the where, when, and how of your trip—the advance planning required to get it together and take it on the road. Because you may not know exactly where in the Cayman Islands you want to go or what to do after you're there, we begin with a quick rundown of the various islands and their attractions. For additional help in planning your trip and for more on-the-ground resources in the Cayman Islands, see chapter 11, "Fast Facts."

1 THE ISLANDS IN BRIEF

First things first—just what, and where, are the Cayman Islands? A British Overseas Territory, the three islands that compose the Cayman archipelago are part of the geographic entity known as the Cayman Ridge, which extends westward from Cuba. Lying off the southwest coast of Cuba, on the way to Mexico, they consist of Grand Cayman, the largest island, followed by Cayman Brac and Little Cayman. The archipelago is actually the top of the underwater Sierra Maestra Range, which runs north into Cuba. The Cayman Trench, the deepest part of the Caribbean Sea, which measures in at a depth of just over 6.4km (4 miles), separates the Cayman Islands trio from Jamaica, which lies 290km (180 miles) to the southeast.

Columbus found the Cayman Islands by accident when he was blown off course en route from Panama to Hispaniola in 1503. The Caymans remained, for many decades, a lair for pirates, refugees from the British justice system, and the home of simple fishermen and, in some cases, runaway slaves. The sandy soil isn't particularly fertile, and as such, the islands never developed the extensive "plantation economy" that became prevalent on neighboring Jamaica and Cuba. The economy was dependent on fishing and trade, and life for the Caymanians was hard, with many residents eking out a living from the sea.

The Cayman Islands were granted independence from Britain in 1962. They remain a staunch member of the British Commonwealth, and pro-Anglo sentiment runs high. In the 1970s, thanks to their growing role as a financial center and tourist destination, the Cayman Islands made rapid development a fact of life. Today, Grand Cayman is the condominium capital of the Caribbean and a major center of the offshore financial industry.

It's been said that residents of the Cayman Islands fall into one of three categories: foreign, mostly British or North European workers in the financial service industries; foreign, mostly British, U.S., or Slavic Europeans specializing in the hotel and restaurant service industries; and the local indigenous Caymanians, the descendants of fishermen, pirates, and traders, whose families have been on the islands since the late 1700s, in some cases.

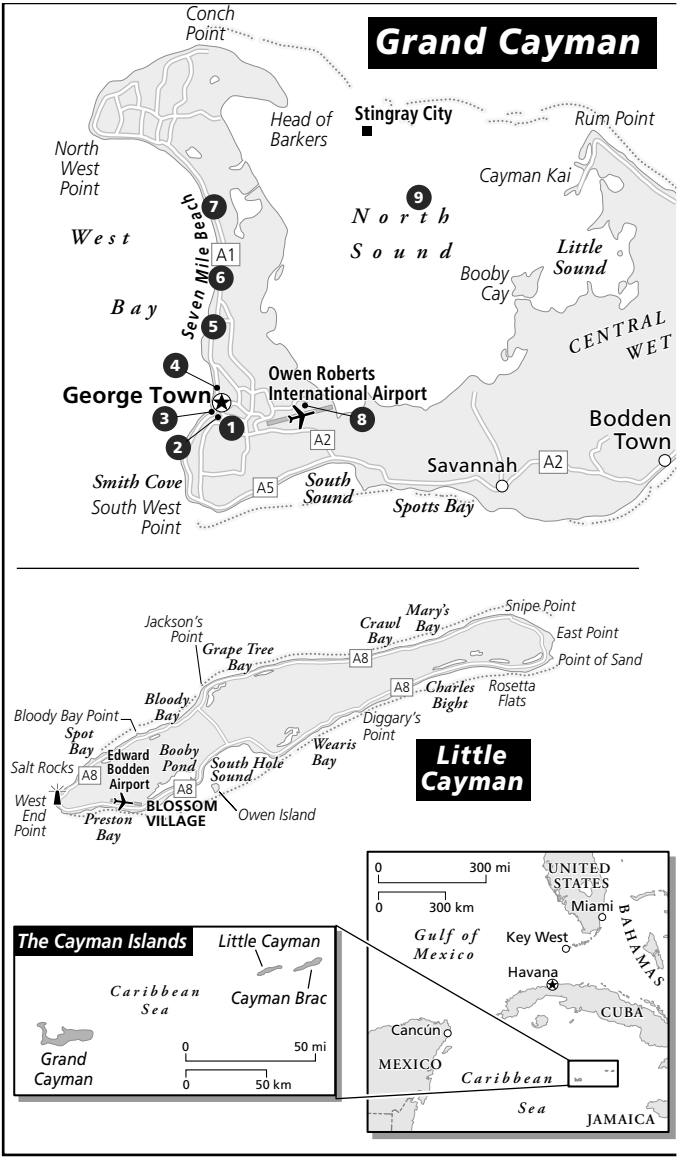
If you're a beach buff, you're in luck here. For the most part, the sand on the Caymans is sugary white, the surf is warm and gentle, and the colors are primarily aqua and turquoise. Grand Cayman is celebrated for its magnificent stretch of white sands, known as Seven Mile Beach, which is lined with hotels and condos. Crowding is rarely a problem on the beach, even with heavy cruise ship arrivals. To satisfy your inner Robinson Crusoe, explore the many hidden coves, beautiful sheltered bays, and expanses of coastline where you can flee the crowds to find your own paradise. The other islands, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, also have hidden beaches and coves.

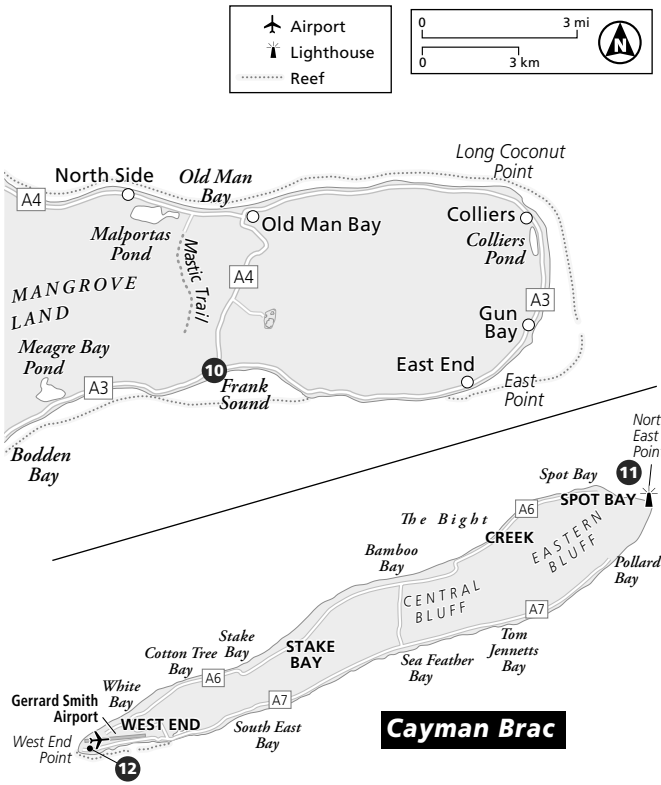
When you tire of the beach—if that's possible—you'll find some of the world's best scuba diving and snorkeling, from the plunge at Bloody Bay Wall off Little Cayman to the calm waters and gentle stingrays at Stingray City off Grand Cayman. The variety of dive sites, the abundant marine life and clear waters, and some of the best scuba-diving and snorkeling outfitters in the world make the Caymans a top diving and snorkeling destination.

In addition to little divers' inns, Grand Cayman has some of the grandest resort hotels in the Caribbean, along with dozens of beachfront condos and timeshares along Seven Mile Beach. The downside is that there are few modest budget inns; the Caymans, for the most part, remain an upmarket destination, doing little to attract the frugal traveler, unlike such Caribbean countries as the Dominican Republic.

The Caymans offer excellent dining. The restaurants on the island are diverse and inventive, and they often boast outstanding chefs. In addition to upscale dining spots, plenty of relatively affordable restaurants serving standard Cayman fare can be found.

While the nightlife scene has improved in recent years, don't expect much. Sipping tropical punch in a bar remains the preferred form of


Grand Cayman
Conch Point
Head of Barkers
Stingray City
Rum Point
North West Point
Cayman Kai
West Bay
North Sound
Seven Mile Beach
A1
Little Sound
Booby Cay
CENTRAL WET
George Town
Owen Roberts International Airport
Bodden Town
A2
Savannah
Smith Cove
South West Point
A5
South Sound
Spotts Bay
Little Cayman
Jackson's Point
Grape Tree Bay
Crawl Bay
Mary's Bay
Snipe Point
East Point
Point of Sand
A8
Charles Bight
Rosetta Flats
Bloody Bay Point
Bloody Bay
Spot Bay
Diggary's Point
Wearis Bay
Salt Rocks
Edward Bodden Airport
Booby Pond
South Hole Sound
West End Point
Preston Bay
BLOSSOM VILLAGE
Owen Island
The Cayman Islands
Little Cayman
Caribbean Sea
Cayman Brac
Grand Cayman
0
50 mi
50 km
0 300 mi
0 300 km
UNITED STATES
Miami
Gulf of Mexico
Key West
BAHAMAS
Havana
CUBA
Cancun
MEXICO
Caribbean Sea
JAMAICA



1 1978: A Marine Conservation Law is passed to preserve the environment as a natural resource.
2 1962: Cayman Islanders vote overwhelmingly to remain a dependency of Britain.
3 1835: Slavery is outlawed by Great Britain.
4 1743: A royal grant is issued, and the first permanent settlement established.
5 1934-40: Commissioner Sir Allen Cardinall becomes the first public figure to promote tourism to the islands.
6 1957: Dive operator Bob Soto begins the first recreational scuba-diving school, creating a world-class attraction.
7 1993: *The Firm*, starring Tom Cruise and based on a John Grisham novel, is shot here.
8 1953: The Owen Roberts Airport is completed; tourism begins.
9 1782: Peace comes to the seas, as the Cayman Islands are no longer a magnet for the pirates.
10 1585: Landing at the eastern part of Grand Cayman Island, Sir Francis Drake spots "great serpents called Caymanas, large like lizards, which are edible."
11 1503: Columbus spots the Cayman Islands, naming them Las Tortugas because of the many sea turtles.
12 1830: A small permanent community is established.

after-dark activity. If you're a casino devotee, know that gambling is not allowed in the Cayman Islands and hustle yourself off to another island like Puerto Rico or Aruba.

The islands have one of the highest standards of living in the Caribbean. Most of their residents are hospitable and courteous, and panhandling or aggressive souvenir hawking is rare. If safety is a factor in your choice of a Caribbean vacation, you can rest assured that the low crime rate in the Cayman Islands is the envy of many small nations in the Caribbean.

The downside? Although the Cayman Islands do have splashes of floral and faunal color, along with rows of royal palms and tall pines swaying in the trade winds, far prettier and more geographically dramatic islands exist in the Caribbean. You won't see any spectacular land vistas, although some of Grand Cayman's beaches, found primarily on the western and northern coasts, rank among the most beautiful in the region.

Most people come to the Cayman Islands to get away from it all in a secluded, safe haven, and many visitors come back after sampling the Caymans for the first time, including honeymooners who return to celebrate their anniversaries.

GRAND CAYMAN The largest of the three islands and a real scuba-diving mecca, Grand Cayman has become one of the Caribbean's hottest tourist destinations in recent years. With more than 500 banks, its capital, George Town, is the offshore banking center of the Caribbean. (You won't have any problems finding an ATM here!) Retirees are drawn to the peace and tranquillity of this British crown colony, site of a major condominium development. Almost all of the Cayman Islands' 38,000-strong population lives on Grand Cayman. The civil manners of the locals reflect their British heritage.

CAYMAN BRAC Short on sandy beaches and devoid of the clichéd Caribbean attractions, Cayman Brac may appear to be a poor sibling of Grand Cayman. However, this island has its devotees, mainly adventure seekers and scuba divers who are drawn to its 30 excellent dive sites, snorkeling, bone- and deep-sea fishing, and bird-watching. The island lies 143km (89 miles) northeast of Grand Cayman and 7.4km (4½ miles) from Little Cayman, and is 19km (12 miles) long, with an average width of 3.5km (2¼ miles). In all, its landmass is a total of only 39 sq. km (15 sq. miles), with its highest point being the Bluff at 42m (138 ft.) above sea level. The island's population is under 2,000.

LITTLE CAYMAN The smallest island of the archipelago, the aptly named Little Cayman, 109km (68 miles) northeast of Grand Cayman, is only 16km (10 miles) long with an average width of 1.6km

(1 mile). Relatively flat, it comprises a total landmass of only 16 sq. km (6 sq. miles), with its highest point at 12m (39 ft.) above sea level. About 125 people reside on the island full-time, sharing living space with some 20,000 red-footed boobies. Most of Little Cayman's residents aren't Caymanian at all, but long-term residents from the United States and elsewhere, including Great Britain and Canada. Who comes here and why? Little Cayman is hailed as one of the three best scuba-diving areas in the world and is a haven for nature lovers, photographers, and those in search of peace and quiet.

2 WHEN TO GO

THE HIGH SEASON & THE OFF SEASON

Hotels charge their highest prices during the peak winter period, from mid-December to mid-April. If you want to travel over Christmas or in the depths of February, especially around U.S. Presidents' Day weekend, you should make your reservations months in advance.

The off season in the Cayman Islands—roughly from mid-April to mid-December, although this varies from hotel to hotel—is one big summer sale, though summer has become more popular in recent years. In most cases, hotels, inns, and condos slash 20% to 50% off their winter rates. Dollar for dollar, you'll spend less money renting a summer house or self-sufficient unit in the Cayman Islands than you would on Cape Cod, Fire Island, or Laguna Beach. You just have to be able to tolerate strong sun.

During the off season, beaches are less crowded and you can get good deals, but restaurants are often closed and hotels provide fewer facilities. Some hotels also use the off season for construction—so be sure to ask if any work is going on and make sure your room is far away from the noise. If you're a single traveler in the off season, ask about the hotel's occupancy rate—especially if you want crowds!

Because there's such a drastic difference in high-season and off-season rates at most hotels, we've included both for every lodging we review. Incredible savings can be enjoyed if your schedule allows you to wait a few months for fun in the sun.

WEATHER

The weather during high season from mid-December to mid-April is perfect for hanging out on the beach: It's usually dry, and the cooling trade winds from the northeast moderate the high temperature. Sometimes a few days will be windy and cloudy, but these periods of inclement weather usually come and go quickly.

Tips A Mighty Wind: Hurricanes on the Cayman Islands

The curse of Cayman weather—the hurricane season—lasts officially from June 1 to November 30. But there's no cause for panic: Satellite forecasts give enough warning that precautions can be taken.

April is the most idyllic month in the Cayman Islands, boasting perfect warm weather before the heat of summer comes in May. In spite of the heat, many Europeans prefer a summer visit. As one visitor who hails from Yorkshire told us, "After a cold winter in the north of England, I've come just for the heat."

Rainy season is from late May until late November. However, it does not rain every day. Often the showers are short bursts (though intense) that are followed by clear skies and plenty of sun.

Even though the Cayman Islands are one of the world's leading scuba-diving destinations, divers often avoid the islands in August and September, when tropical storms can churn the waters. However, because the islands have so many dive sites, you can almost always find places to dive, even in August and September.

Average Temperature & Rainfall in Grand Cayman

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temp. (°F)	77	77	79	81	82	84	84	84	83	82	81	78
Temp. (°C)	25	25	26	27	28	29	29	29	28	28	27	26
Rainfall (in.)	2.3	1.7	1.2	1.9	5.1	7.2	7.0	6.7	8.3	9.3	4.7	2.3

CAYMAN ISLANDS CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For an exhaustive list of events beyond those listed here, check **http://events.frommers.com**, where you'll find a searchable, up-to-the-minute roster of what's happening in cities all over the world.

January

Art@Government House. This excellent annual event, featuring displays of various art forms by local and resident artists, takes place on the front lawn of Government House. The day is full of entertainment, food, and local arts and crafts. Children can create their own unique works of art in the Kids Corner. Contact the National Gallery at ✆ **345/945-8111.** Last Saturday in January.

International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame. Some of the leading scuba divers in the world show up for this annual ceremony at The Harquail Theatre on Grand Cayman. Entertainment at the event includes audiovisual presentations of scuba-diving feats, live music by local bands, and a food-and-cocktail reception. Tickets are available at the tourist office. For more information, contact ✆ **345/949-8522** or click on www.scubahalloffame.com. Late January.

February

Little Cayman Mardi Gras Festival. Everybody on this small island turns out for this festive event. Parade participants show up from Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac. The parade begins in the morning at Head O' Bay and continues to the airport. Contact Gladys Howard at ✆ **345/948-1010;** www.caribbeanchoice.com. Saturday before Ash Wednesday.

March

The Cayman Islands Orchid Show. This annual orchid show takes place at the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park from 9am to 5pm. Stop by the park to view the exquisite displays of orchids in bloom. The Orchid Society also hosts a special orchid talk and demonstration. Contact Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park at ✆ **345/947-3558;** www.botanic-park.ky. Early March.

April

Cayfest (The National Festival of the Arts). This 2-week event celebrates and showcases the art and culture of the Cayman Islands. The expo opens at Seven Mile Beach with a reenactment of a traditional boat launch. In George Town, you'll find open-air events with local bands, arts and crafts, native cooking, and other demonstrations of local talent, such as culinary and song competitions. For more information, contact ✆ **345/949-5477.** Mid-April.

Cayman Islands Million Dollar Run. Launched in 2003 and taking place on Grand Cayman, this is a show of power and speed on the water, attracting powerboat aficionados and fun seekers from around the world. The hottest, fastest, and most exotic boats gather for this race, with captains competing for US$10,000 in cash and prizes. For more information, contact ✆ **345/949-8423** or visit www.mdr.ky. Third week of April.

Easter Regatta. The Cayman Islands Sailing Club sponsors this annual event off Grand Cayman. The race attracts many boaters, who show up in catamarans ranging from 6 to 24m (20–79 ft.). Highlights include a race to the Banks, a dinghy regatta, and a sail around the island to North Sound. Contact ✆ **345/947-7913** or go to www.sailing.ky for dates and more specific information. Staged right before Easter.

May

Annual Batabano Carnival. This Mardi Gras–like event in George Town features popular carnival music and live soca (a type of calypso music with elements of soul, often with lyrics on topical or humorous subjects) and calypso bands. The event is enhanced by concession stands with Caymanian and Caribbean cuisine and delicacies. Call ✆ **345/916-1740** or visit www.caymancarnival.com for more information.

June

Cayman Islands International Aviation Week. This annual air show, off Grand Cayman, includes aerial feats, displays, safety seminars, and a "fly-in" to Cayman Brac. It's sponsored by Cayman Caravan (✆ **843/342-4439;** www.cayman-caravan.com) in Hilton Head, South Carolina. Third week of June.

Queen's Birthday. To honor the British heritage of the Cayman Islands, the Queen's birthday is celebrated every year in George Town on Grand Cayman. The streets of the capital are filled with a full military dress parade, complete with a 21-gun salute. You can attend an open house and garden reception at Government House. Dates vary, and the event is not always on the Queen's actual birthday. Contact the Cayman Islands Tourism Association at ✆ **345/949-8522** or visit www.cita.ky for dates and details.

July

Taste of Cayman. This event, taking place on Grand Cayman, is the "eatfest" of the islands, showcasing a sampling of different cuisines from more than 40 restaurants. Live entertainment, games for kids, and tasty cooking competitions are also part of the fun. Contact the Cayman Islands Tourism Association at ✆ **345/949-8522;** www.cita.ky. First weekend in July.

November

Cayman Islands Pirates Week. This is a national festival in which cutlass-bearing pirates and sassy wenches storm George Town, capture the governor, throng the streets, and stage a costume parade. The celebration, which is held throughout the Caymans, pays tribute to the nation's past and its cultural heritage. For the exact dates, contact the **Pirates Week Festival Administration** (✆ **345/949-5859;** www.piratesweekfestival.com). Early November.

CITA Wet Fest. This is Grand Cayman's annual festival of watersports, including snorkeling, parasailing, and kayaking. Kiosks sell island food, live bands entertain, and WaveRunner rides are offered. Contact the Cayman Islands Tourism Association (CITA) at ✆ **345/949-5859** or visit www.cita.ky for more details and the exact date. One day during the second week of November.

Remembrance Day. This is the Cayman Islands' national day of mourning and remembrance for the military heroes lost during World Wars I and II, and for all sailors and mariners lost at sea during the long maritime history of the Cayman Islands. During this national holiday, all schools, banks, and businesses are closed. In a public ceremony, wreaths are laid on two war monuments near the corner of Fort and North Church streets in downtown George Town, on Grand Cayman. Solemn music is broadcast on the radio and churches hold special ceremonies and masses. The second Monday in November.

DECEMBER

Cayman Islands Jazz Fest. Jazz, rhythm & blues, and other music enliven George Town on Grand Cayman. Visit www.caymanislands.ky/jazzfest for dates and details. First week of December.

3 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

All visitors, including those from the U.S. and the British Commonwealth countries, must have a valid return or ongoing plane ticket. All persons 12 years of age or older are charged a **departure tax** of CI$20. Tax is included in the airfare.

PASSPORTS

All **U.S. citizens** traveling to the Cayman Islands must carry a valid passport. **Canadian** and **U.K. citizens** are not required to carry a passport but need to provide proof of citizenship, such as an original birth certificate with a raised seal or a notarized copy of a birth certificate, and a valid government-issued photo ID. Citizens of all other nations need a passport for entry into the Cayman Islands. Travelers who carry passports must ensure their passport is valid for up to 6 months after the scheduled date of return to the home country.

Remember, if you are not a U.S. citizen and you are stopping in or traveling through the U.S., or a U.S. territory (including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands) before arriving in the Cayman Islands, you will need a passport and possibly a U.S. visa. For the most up-to-date information on obtaining transit visas for the U.S., consult **http://travel.state.gov**.

See www.frommers.com/planning for information on how to obtain a passport. For other information, please contact the following agencies.

FOR RESIDENTS OF AUSTRALIA Contact the **Australian Passport Information Service** at ✆ **131-232,** or visit the government website at www.passports.gov.au.

FOR RESIDENTS OF CANADA Contact the central **Passport Office,** Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G3 (✆ **800/567-6868;** www.ppt.gc.ca).

FOR RESIDENTS OF IRELAND Contact the **Passport Office,** Setanta Centre, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2 (✆ **01/671-1633;** www.irlgov.ie/iveagh).

FOR RESIDENTS OF NEW ZEALAND Contact the **Passports Office** at ✆ **0800/225-050** in New Zealand or 04/474-8100, or log on to www.passports.govt.nz.

FOR RESIDENTS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM Visit your nearest passport office, major post office or travel agency, or contact the **United Kingdom Passport Service** at ✆ **0870/521-0410,** or search its website at wwwe.ukpa.gov.uk.

FOR RESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES To find your regional passport office, either check the U.S. State Department website or call the **National Passport Information Center** toll-free number (✆ **877/487-2778**) for automated information.

For a country-by-country listing of passport requirements around the world, go to the "Foreign Entry Requirement" Web page of the U.S. State Department at **http://travel.state.gov**.

VISAS

Visas for the Cayman Islands are not required for U.S., Canadian, U.K., or E.U. citizens, as well as citizens of several countries in South America and the Middle East. Consult **www.caymanislands.ky**, or your nearest Cayman Islands tourist office, for a full list of nationalities that are required to carry a visa. To apply for a visa for the Cayman Islands, you must contact your nearest British Consulate or High Commission Office.

CUSTOMS

For answers to complicated questions about what you can and cannot bring into the Cayman Islands, contact Cayman Islands Customs (✆ **345/949-4573** or www.caymanislandscustoms.com).

What You Can Bring into the Cayman Islands

Cayman Islands Customs authorities enforce strict regulations regarding temporary importing or exporting of firearms of any kind, spear guns, pole spears, Hawaiian slings, live plants, and plant cuttings. Raw fruits and vegetables are also restricted. Visitors age 18 or over are

allowed to bring in—duty-free—4 liters of wine or one case of beer; 1 liter of alcohol; and 200 cigarettes, 25 cigars, or 250 grams of tobacco.

What You Can Take Home from the Cayman Islands

If you are thinking of bringing sea turtle products back home, first consult the website of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (www.cites.org). The Convention strictly prohibits the importation of sea turtle products into the countries that have signed the agreement. The U.S., U.K., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand are among the 171 countries that adhere to this convention. In addition, U.S. Customs prohibits the transshipment of turtle products through the United States, and any products discovered will be confiscated.

U.S. Citizens: Returning U.S. citizens who have been away for at least 48 hours are allowed to bring back, once every 30 days, US$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. You'll be charged a flat rate of 4% duty on the next US$1,000 worth of purchases. Be sure to have your receipts handy. On mailed gifts, the duty-free limit is US$200. With some exceptions, you cannot bring fresh fruits and vegetables into the United States.

For specifics on what you can bring back, download the invaluable free pamphlet *Know Before You Go* online at **www.cbp.gov** (click on "Travel," and then on "Know Before You Go"), or contact **U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP),** 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20229 (✆ **877/287-8667;** www.cbp.gov), and request the pamphlet.

Canadian Citizens: Canada allows its citizens a C$750 exemption, and you're allowed to bring back duty-free one carton of cigarettes, one can of tobacco, 40 imperial ounces of liquor, and 50 cigars if you meet the minimum age requirements set by the province or territory where you enter Canada. In addition, you're allowed to mail gifts to Canada valued at less than C$60 each day, provided they're unsolicited and don't contain alcohol or tobacco (write on the package "Unsolicited gift, under C$60 value"). All valuables should be declared on the Y-38 form before departure from Canada, including serial numbers of valuables you already own, such as expensive foreign cameras. ***Note:*** The C$750 exemption can be used only once a year and only after an absence of 7 days. For a clear summary of Canadian rules, write for the booklet *I Declare,* issued by the **Canada Border Services Agency** (✆ **800/461-9999** in Canada or 204/983-3500; www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca).

U.K. Citizens: U.K. citizens have a Customs allowance of 200 cigarettes; 50 cigars; 250 grams of smoking tobacco; 2 liters of still table wine; 1 liter of spirits or strong liqueurs (over 22% volume); 2 liters of fortified wine, sparkling wine, or other liqueurs; 60 cubic

centimeters (mL) of perfume; 250 cubic centimeters (mL) of toilet water; and £145 worth of all other goods, including gifts and souvenirs. People under 17 cannot have the tobacco or alcohol allowance. For more information, contact HM Customs & Excise at ✆ **0845/010-9000** (from outside the U.K., 020/8929-0152), or consult the website at www.hmrc.gov.uk.

Australian Citizens: The duty-free allowance in Australia is A$900 or, for those under 18, A$450. Citizens over age 18 can bring back 250 cigarettes or 250 grams of loose tobacco, and 2.25 liters of alcohol. If you're returning with valuables you already own, such as foreign-made cameras, you should file form B263. A helpful brochure available from Australian consulates or Customs offices is *Know Before You Go.* For more information, call the **Australian Customs Service** at ✆ **1300/363-263,** or log on to www.customs.gov.au.

New Zealand Citizens: The duty-free allowance for New Zealand is NZ$700. Citizens over 17 can bring back 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars, or 250 grams of tobacco (or a mixture of all three if their combined weight doesn't exceed 250g); plus 4.5 liters of wine and beer; or 1.125 liters of liquor. New Zealand currency does not carry import or export restrictions. Fill out a certificate of export, listing the valuables you are taking out of the country; that way, you can bring them back without paying duty. Most questions are answered in a free pamphlet available at New Zealand consulates and Customs offices: *New Zealand Customs Guide for Travellers, Notice No. 4.* For more information, contact **New Zealand Customs,** The Customhouse, 17–21 Whitmore St., Box 2218, Wellington (✆ **04/473-6099** or 0800/428-786; www.customs.govt.nz).

MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

Unless you're arriving from an area known to be suffering from an epidemic (particularly cholera or yellow fever), inoculations or vaccinations are not required for entry into the Cayman Islands.

4 GETTING THERE & GETTING AROUND

GETTING TO THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

By Plane

The main gateway to the Cayman Islands is through Grand Cayman. Flights to Grand Cayman Island land at **Owen Roberts International Airport (GCM)** (✆ **345/949-5252;** www.grand-cayman-gcm.airports-guides.com). The airport lies just east of George Town, the

capital, and is only a short taxi ride from most of the hotels along Seven Mile Beach. Customs can be aggressive at times, and you'll need to show a firmly booked hotel reservation and an ongoing or return plane ticket.

The Department of Tourism operates an information bureau (✆ **345/949-2635**), which is open daily from 11am to 9pm, right at the airport. You'll also find ATMs in the airport, which can dispense money in either Cayman Island or U.S. dollars. For a list of airlines that travel to the Cayman Islands, see "Airline, Hotel & Car Rental Websites," p. 191.

FROM THE UNITED STATES The Cayman Islands are easily accessible. Flying time from Miami is 1 hour 20 minutes; from Houston, 2 hours 45 minutes; from Tampa, 1 hour 40 minutes; and from Atlanta, 1 hour 30 minutes. Only a handful of nonstop flights are available from the U.S. Midwest, so most visitors use Miami as their gateway.

Cayman Airways (✆ **800/422-9626** in the U.S. and Canada, or 345/949-2311; www.caymanairways.com) offers the most frequent service to Grand Cayman, with three daily flights from Miami, five flights a week from Tampa, and three flights a week from New York. Also available is seasonal service from Chicago and Washington, D.C.

Many visitors also fly to Grand Cayman on **American Airlines** (✆ **800/433-7300;** www.aa.com), which offers direct nonstop flights from Miami to Grand Cayman daily. During the winter months, **Northwest Airlines** (✆ **800/225-2525;** www.nwa.com) flies to Grand Cayman from Detroit and Memphis. **US Airways** (✆ **800/622-1015;** www.usairways.com) offers daily nonstop flights from Charlotte, North Carolina; on Saturday, it also has flights to George Town from Philadelphia and has once-a-week service from Boston during the winter. **Delta Air Lines** (✆ **800/221-1212;** www.delta.com) flies daily into Grand Cayman from its hub in Atlanta. **Continental Airlines** (✆ **800/231-0856;** www.continental.com) offers daily service between its Houston hub and Grand Cayman. It also flies from Newark, New Jersey, on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday.

FROM CANADA **Air Canada** (✆ **888/247-2262;** www.aircanada.com) flies nonstop from Toronto to George Town once weekly, on Sunday. The flight takes 4 hours.

FROM THE U.K. **British Airways** (✆ **800/AIRWAYS** [247-9297] in the U.S., or 0870/859-9850 in the U.K.; wwwbritishairways.com) has direct flights from London's Heathrow to Grand Cayman on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, with returning flights on the same days. The plane touches down briefly at Nassau in The Bahamas. Total flight time is 10 hours. British Airways also flies twice

Tips Don't Stow It—Ship It

Though pricey, it's sometimes worthwhile to travel luggage-free, particularly if you're toting diving equipment, meetings materials, or baby furniture. Specialists in door-to-door luggage delivery include **SkyCap International** (www.skycapinternational.com) and **Sports Express** (www.sportsexpress.com).

daily from Heathrow to Miami, where continuing flights can be booked on Cayman Airways into George Town.

Getting into Town from the Airport

Plenty of taxis meet all arriving planes. The government sets taxi fares, which apply to one to three passengers sharing a ride. Each additional person (additional to a group of three) pays 25% of the fare. Typical prices (subject to change) are as follows: US$15 from the airport to the southern end of Seven Mile Beach; US$28 from the airport to the northern end of Seven Mile Beach; US$65 from the airport to the East End; and US$65 from the airport to Rum Point on the north shore.

To protect taxi drivers and their livelihood, the government doesn't allow buses to run back and forth between town and the airport.

Many car rental companies operate kiosks in the airport. It's best to reserve before flying to Grand Cayman. For specifics, see "Getting Around," later in this chapter.

Flying for Less: Tips for Getting the Best Airfare

- Passengers who can book their ticket either **long in advance or at the last minute,** or who **fly midweek** or **at less-trafficked hours,** may pay a fraction of the full fare. If your schedule is flexible, say so, and ask if you can secure a cheaper fare by changing your flight plans.
- Search **the Internet** for cheap fares. The most popular online travel agencies are **Travelocity** (www.travelocity.com and www.travelocity.co.uk), **Expedia** (www.expedia.com and www.expedia.co.uk or www.expedia.ca), and **Orbitz** (www.orbitz.com). In the U.K., go to **Travelsupermarket** (✆ **0845/345-5708;** www.travelsupermarket.com), a flight search engine that offers flight comparisons for the budget airlines whose seats often end up in bucket-shop sales. Other websites for booking airline tickets online include **Cheapflights.com,**

SmarterTravel.com, Priceline.com, and **Opodo** (www.opodo.co.uk). Meta-search sites (which find and then direct you to airline and hotel websites for booking) include **SideStep.com** and **Kayak.com**—the latter includes fares for budget carriers like jetBlue and Spirit as well as major airlines. **Lastminute.com** is a great source for last-minute flights and getaways. In addition, most airlines offer online-only fares that even their phone agents know nothing about. British travelers should check **Flights International** (✆ **0800/018-7050;** www.flights-international.com) for deals on flights all over the world.

- Keep an eye on local newspapers for **promotional specials** or **fare wars,** when airlines lower prices on their popular routes.
- **Consolidators,** also known as bucket shops, are wholesale brokers in the airline ticket game. Consolidators buy deeply discounted tickets ("distressed" inventories of unsold seats) from airlines and sell them to online ticket agencies, travel agents, tour operators, corporations, and, to a lesser degree, the general public. Consolidators advertise in Sunday newspaper travel sections (often in small ads with tiny type), both in the U.S. and the U.K. They can be great sources for cheap international tickets. On the downside, bucket-shop tickets are often rigged with restrictions, such as stiff cancellation penalties (as high as 50%–75% of the ticket price). And keep in mind that most of what you see advertised is of limited availability. Several reliable consolidators are worldwide and available online. **STA Travel** (www.statravel.com) has been the world's leading consolidator for students since purchasing Council Travel, but its fares are competitive for travelers of all ages. **Flights.com** (✆ **201/541-3826;** www.flights.com) has excellent fares worldwide, particularly to Europe. It also has "local" websites in 12 countries. **AirTicketsDirect** (✆ **888/858-8884;** www.airtickets direct.com) is based in Montreal and leverages the Canadian dollar for low fares; it also books trips to places that U.S. travel agents won't touch, such as Cuba.
- Join **frequent-flier clubs.** Frequent-flier membership doesn't cost a cent, but it does entitle you to free tickets or upgrades when you amass the airline's required number of frequent-flier points. You don't even have to fly to earn points; **frequent-flier credit cards** can earn you thousands of miles for doing your everyday shopping. But keep in mind that award seats are limited, seats on popular routes are hard to snag, and more and more major airlines are cutting their expiration periods for mileage points—so check your airline's frequent-flier program so you don't lose your miles before you use them. ***Inside tip:*** Award seats are offered almost a year in

Tips Getting Through the Airport

- Arrive at the airport at least 1 hour before a domestic flight and 2 hours before an international flight. You can check the average wait times at your airport by going to the TSA **Security Checkpoint Wait Times** site for airports in the U.S. (**http://waittime.tsa.dhs.gov**).
- Know what you can carry on and what you can't. For the latest updates on items you are prohibited to bring in carry-on luggage through the U.S., go to **www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel**.
- Beat the ticket-counter lines by using the self-service electronic ticket kiosks at the airport or even printing out your boarding pass at home from the airline website. Using curbside check-in is also a smart way to avoid lines.
- Help speed up security before you're screened. Remove jackets, shoes, belt buckles, heavy jewelry, and watches and place them either in your carry-on luggage or the security bins provided. Place keys, coins, cellphones, and pagers in a security bin. If you have metallic body parts, carry a note from your doctor. When possible, keep packing liquids in checked baggage.
- Use a TSA-approved lock for your checked luggage. Look for Travel Sentry–certified locks at luggage or travel shops and Brookstone stores (or online at www.brookstone.com).

advance, but seats also open up at the last minute, so if your travel plans are flexible, you may strike gold. To play the frequent-flier game to your best advantage, consult the community bulletin boards on **FlyerTalk** (www.flyertalk.com) or go to Randy Petersen's **Inside Flyer** (www.insideflyer.com). Petersen and friends review all the programs in detail and post regular updates on changes in policies and trends.

BY CRUISE SHIP

Here's a brief rundown of some of the major cruise lines that serve the Caribbean. For more detailed information, pick up a copy of *Frommer's Caribbean Cruises & Ports of Call.*

Booking a Cruise

If you've developed a relationship with a favorite travel agency, then by all means, leave the details to the tried-and-true specialists. Many agents will propose a package deal that includes air fare to your port of embarkation. It's possible to purchase your air ticket on your own and book your cruise ticket separately, but in most cases you'll save big bucks by combining the fares into a package deal.

You're also likely to save money—sometimes *lots* of money—by contacting a specialist who focuses on cruise bookings. He or she will be able to match you with a cruise line whose style suits you, and can also steer you toward any special sales or promotions.

Here are some travel agencies to consider: **Cruises Inc.** (✆ **888/218-4228** or 800/854-0500; www.cruiseinc.com); **CruisesOnly** (✆ **800/278-4737;** www.cruisesonly.com); **The Cruise Company** (✆ **800/289-5505** or 402/339-6800; www.thecruisecompany.com); **Kelly Cruises** (✆ **800/837-7447** or 630/990-1111; www.kellycruises.com); **Hartford Holidays Travel** (✆ **800/828-4813** or 516/746-6670; www.hartfordholidays.com); and **Mann Travel and Cruises** (✆ **800/849-2028;** www.manntravels.com). Cruise lines don't profit if their megaships don't fill up near peak capacity, so price wars pop up all the time. The companies listed above are tuned in to last-minute sales resulting from the price wars.

You're likely to sail to the Caymans from Miami, which has become the cruise capital of the world. Other departure ports in Florida include Port Everglades (at Fort Lauderdale), Port Canaveral, and Tampa.

Cruise Lines

- **Carnival Cruise Lines** (✆ **888/CARNIVAL** [2276-4825]; www.carnival.com): Offering affordable vacations on some of the biggest and most vividly decorated ships afloat, Carnival is the brashest and most successful mass-market cruise line in the world. More than 17 of its vessels depart for the Caribbean from Miami, Tampa, New Orleans, Port Canaveral, and San Juan, and some of them specialize in 7-day or longer tours that feature stopovers at selected ports throughout the eastern, western, and southern Caribbean, including Grand Cayman. The cruises are a good value and feature nonstop activities, plus lots of brightly colored drinks. Passengers tend to be young at heart, ready to party, and keyed up for nonstop, round-the-clock fun. While it's one of the best lines to choose if you're single, Carnival's ships certainly aren't overrun by singles—families (who appreciate the well-run children's programs) and couples are definitely in the majority. The average onboard age

is a relatively youthful 42. Note that guests are required to be 21 years old (on embarkation day) to travel alone. Those under the age of 21 must be accompanied in the same stateroom by a parent or guardian 25 or older. The exceptions to this rule are a documented married minor couple or legal domestic partners/same-sex union.

- **Celebrity Cruises** (✆ **800/647-2251** or 316/554-5961; www.celebritycruises.com): Celebrity maintains stylish, medium-to-large ships with cruises that last between 7 and 15 nights and visit ports such as Key West, San Juan, Grand Cayman, St. Thomas, Ocho Rios (Jamaica), Antigua, and Cozumel (Mexico), to name a few. The ships themselves are works of art—gorgeously designed and featuring clean lines and modern materials—and the onboard atmosphere is classy without being at all stuffy. Accommodations are roomy and well equipped, cuisine is the most refined of any of its competitors, and service is impeccable. The ships also feature beautiful spas. Plus, cruises are competitively priced (though you should watch out for the pricey extras). Clients choose Celebrity because it offers a well-balanced cruise, with lots of activities and a glamorous, exciting atmosphere that's both refined (think champagne and cozy lounges) and fun (think "dress your husband up in women's clothes" contests). Most passengers are couples in their mid-30s and up, with decent numbers of honeymooners and couples celebrating anniversaries, as well as families with children in summer and during the holidays.
- **Costa Cruises** (✆ **800/462-6782;** www.costacruises.com): Costa sails the 1,358-passenger *Costa Magica* and the 2,112-passenger *Costa Mediterranea* on western and eastern Caribbean cruises on alternate weeks, departing from Fort Lauderdale. Ports of call on the eastern Caribbean itineraries include stopovers in San Juan, St. Thomas, and Nassau. Itineraries through the western Caribbean include stopovers at Grand Cayman, Ocho Rios or Montego Bay (Jamaica), Key West, and Cozumel (Mexico). There's an Italian flavor and lots of Italian design onboard here and an atmosphere of relaxed indulgence. The food is standard or even better. Costa attracts passengers of all ages who want lots of action and who deliberately avoid all-American megaships like those of Carnival. Italian-Americans are heavily represented aboard every Caribbean cruise, and in general, passengers like to participate and have a good time. In the Caribbean, Costa appeals to retirees and young couples, although there are more passengers over 50 than under. Typically you won't see more than 40 or 50 kids on any one cruise except during holidays such as Christmas and spring break. While about 80%

to 90% of passengers are from North America, there's usually a healthy percentage from Europe and South America as well.

- **Holland America Line** (✆ **800/426-0327;** www.hollandamerica.com): Holland America offers the most Old World–style cruise experience of the mainstream lines, aboard a fleet of respectably hefty and good-looking ships. The cruise line provides solid value, with few jolts or surprises, and attracts a solid, well-grounded clientele of primarily older travelers (so late-night revelers and serious partiers might want to book cruises on other lines, such as Carnival). The 7-day and 10- to 14-day cruises stop at deep-water mainstream ports throughout the Caribbean, including Key West, Grand Cayman, St. Martin, St. Lucia, Curaçao, Barbados, and St. Thomas. Although younger faces are starting to pepper the mix in greater numbers, most HAL passengers still tend to be low-key, fairly sedentary 55-plus North American couples. Only about 30 or 40 people per cruise will be traveling solo.

Getting into Town from the Cruise Ship Terminal

Cruise ships anchor off George Town and then ferry passengers to the terminals along Harbour Drive, which is in the heart of the shopping and sightseeing attractions. The waters are often choppy here, so anticipate a rough ride. The Grand Cayman tourist office dispenses information from a little kiosk at the pier when cruise ships arrive. Taxis line up to meet arriving passengers. If you need to call home, there's a phone center accepting credit cards nearby along Shedden Road.

GETTING AROUND

This section includes information on getting around Grand Cayman, the largest island in the Cayman Islands. For information on getting around on Little Cayman and Cayman Brac, see p. 173 and p. 156, respectively.

By Car

Is it necessary to rent a car on Grand Cayman? It depends. If you want to explore the island, you can do so on a far less expensive organized tour. Many visitors prefer to settle into their hotels at Seven Mile Beach for the duration of their visit, perhaps taking one tour or venturing into George Town for a shopping expedition. If you fall into this category, you can easily depend on buses or taxis and save yourself the hassle and expense of a renting a car. However, if you wish to explore the island and don't want to depend on taxis, a rental car is an excellent idea.

Tips Renting a Car 101

All the major car rental companies maintain kiosks within walking distance of the airport terminal on Grand Cayman, although some visitors find it easier to take a taxi to their hotel and arrange for their car to be delivered there.

All major companies suggest that car rentals be reserved at least 6 to 36 hours **in advance** of arrival in the Caymans. In midwinter you should reserve days in advance because of heavy demand.

There is definite age "discrimination" in the Cayman Islands. Always check the age requirement with the rental agency before cementing a deal. At Avis you can be 21 years old, but at Hertz, for example, you must be 25. Budget also requires that you be 25 years old and—get this—definitely not beyond 75 years of age.

The British tradition of ***driving on the left*** is followed in the Cayman Islands. A driving permit is mandatory if you rent a car. All car rental companies are required by law to issue this permit and collect the fee of US$7.50. Permits, which are valid for 6 months, are also issued at the George Town Police Station on Elgin Avenue (✆ **345/949-4222**).

Prices of car rentals depend on the season, with the highest rates charged from mid-December to mid-April. In the off season, prices are often reduced by around 35%. Several car rental companies operate on the island, including **Avis** (✆ **800/331-1212** in the U.S., or 345/949-2468 on Grand Cayman; www.avis.com); **Budget** (✆ **800/527-0700** in the U.S., or 345/949-5605 on Grand Cayman; www.budgetcayman.com); **Cayman Auto Rentals,** 135 N. Church St. in George Town (✆ **345/949-1013;** www.caymanautorentals.com.ky); **Hertz** (✆ **800/654-3001** in the U.S., or 345/949-2280 on Grand Cayman; www.hertz.com); and **Thrifty** (✆ **800-THRIFTY** [847-4389] in the U.S., or 345/949-6640 on Grand Cayman; www.thrifty.com). Avis, Budget, and Cayman Auto Rentals require that reservations be made between 6 and 36 hours before pickup. For more information, see "Airline, Hotel & Car Rental Websites," p. 191.

The speed limit is 48kmph (30 mph) in built-up areas such as George Town and along Seven Mile Beach, or 64kmph (40 mph) on most other island roads. The highest speed limit on the island is in

the East End, where posted speeds go up to 81kmph (50 mph). All gas prices are published at www.planning.gov.ky. Stations more or less charge the same, ranging from CI$3 to CI$4 per gallon. The busiest stations include Jose's Service Center across from the airport (✆ **345/949-5500**); Savannah Texaco across from Countryside Shopping Village (✆ **345/947-3660**); and Texas 7-Mile Beach Star Mart at Seven Mile Beach (✆ **345/949-0175**).

By Taxi or Limo Bus

Taxicabs, with drivers who are generally informative and friendly, are plentiful at the airport and in front of the cruise ship terminals in George Town. You'll also find them parked in front of the major resorts along Seven Mile Beach. For the most part, drivers are among the most honest you are likely to find in the Caribbean. Shirtless, wet, or damp passengers are frowned upon and may not be taken at all. If you're going out at night, a member of the staff at your resort will often call a taxi for you. Many cabs can be hired for a tour of the island.

The government sets cab prices and regulates the cabbies, so every driver should have the official government rate sheet. Inform the driver where you're heading and agree on the fare before getting into the cab. You may want to ask to see the official rate sheet. If you're paying in U.S. dollars, don't expect the driver to accept denominations larger than US$20. Tipping cabbies between 15% and 20% is the local custom.

The island's major taxi companies include **Burtons Taxi Service** (✆ **345/926-8294;** www.burtons.ky) and **A.A. Transportation** (✆ **345/949-7222**). If you're going to be out late, you'll have to make advance arrangements with either of these companies for pickup. Contact the companies from Monday to Friday between 7am and 11pm or Saturday between 7am and 6pm to arrange late-night pickup times.

McCurley's Tours, North Side (✆ **345/947-9626**) provides transport to and from the airport in air-conditioned limo buses. **Elite Transportation** (✆ **345/949-5963**) also arranges airport transfers and personalized sightseeing charters. It is the only transport service on the island providing wheelchair transportation.

By Bus

Buses are mainly used by islanders going to and from work, although visitors who have endless patience and plenty of time to get around also take advantage of them. Bus service was first launched in 1998, with a new terminal installed adjacent to the Public Library on Edward Street in the center of George Town. This terminal serves as

the dispatch point for buses to all districts. In all, 38 minibuses serve eight routes. The most useful line runs from George Town along Seven Mile Beach every 20 minutes during the day. Daily service runs from 6am to midnight, with most fares costing CI$1.50 to CI$2.

Buses serve all the main points on the island, including Seven Mile Beach, West Bay, Bodden Town, East End, and North Side. There is no central number to call, since most of the buses are independently operated. However, for complaints and feedback, call ✆ **345/945-5100,** although often you'll only get a recording.

By Bike or Scooter

Grand Cayman is one of the best Caribbean islands for biking, as its main arteries are relatively flat, decently paved, wide, and properly signposted. If you stick to the coastal route, you'll experience few difficulties except for unexpected downpours. Side roads, however, can be difficult, especially if you're attempting to venture a bit into the interior. You should avoid the morning and evening rush hours at George Town and along Seven Mile Beach if possible.

In spite of Grand Cayman's reputation for safety, bicycle theft is a problem. If you're going to leave your bike unguarded, perhaps while going for a swim on a beach, make sure that it's secured, just as you would in any urban area.

A reliable independent outfitter for bike and scooter rentals on Grand Cayman is **Cayman Cycle Rentals,** Coconut Place, West Bay Road (✆ **345/945-4021**), which is open daily from 9am to 5pm, offering a fleet of scooters, 10-speed bikes, and mountain bikes. They also provide locks and maps. Some of the bike rentals have baskets. Bikes cost US$20 per day, and scooters are US$40 a day. A US$100 deposit is required for bikes and a US$200 deposit is required for a scooter. If you don't have a credit card, a cash deposit of US$500 is required for both bikes and scooters. Insurance (which is optional) costs an additional US$26 per day.

Before arranging a bike rental at Cayman Cycle Rentals, check with your hotel to see if they rent bikes—many of them do. Cayman law requires that all scooter riders wear a helmet.

5 MONEY & COSTS

The Cayman Islands Dollar is the official currency of the Cayman Islands, although U.S. dollars are readily accepted everywhere. Although some international banks abbreviate it as KYD, the country's currency is usually identified within the Cayman Islands as CI$.

The Value of the Cayman Islands Dollar vs. Other Popular Currencies

CI$	US$	UK£	C$	Euro(€)	A$	NZ$
1.00	1.25	0.90	1.50	0.90	1.80	2.00
2.00	2.50	1.80	3.00	1.80	3.60	4.00
3.00	3.75	2.70	4.50	2.70	5.40	6.00
4.00	5.00	3.60	6.00	3.60	7.20	8.00
5.00	6.25	4.50	7.50	4.50	9.00	10.00
6.00	7.50	5.40	9.00	5.40	10.80	12.00
7.00	8.75	6.30	10.50	6.30	12.60	14.00
8.00	10.00	7.20	12.00	7.20	14.40	16.00
9.00	11.25	8.10	13.50	8.10	16.20	18.00
10.00	12.50	9.00	15.00	9.00	18.00	20.00
15.00	18.75	13.50	22.50	13.50	27.00	30.00
20.00	25.00	18.00	30.00	18.00	36.00	40.00
25.00	31.25	22.50	37.50	22.50	45.00	50.00
50.00	62.50	45.00	75.00	45.00	90.00	100.00
75.00	93.75	67.50	112.50	67.50	135.00	150.00
100.00	125.00	90.00	150.00	90.00	180.00	200.00
125.00	156.25	112.50	187.50	112.50	225.00	250.00
150.00	187.50	135.00	225.00	135.00	270.00	300.00
175.00	218.75	157.50	262.50	157.50	315.00	350.00
200.00	250.00	180.00	300.00	180.00	360.00	400.00
225.00	281.25	202.50	337.50	202.50	405.00	450.00
250.00	312.50	225.00	375.00	225.00	450.00	500.00
275.00	343.75	247.50	412.50	247.50	495.00	550.00
300.00	375.00	270.00	450.00	270.00	540.00	600.00
350.00	437.50	315.00	525.00	315.00	630.00	700.00
400.00	500.00	360.00	600.00	360.00	720.00	800.00
500.00	625.00	450.00	750.00	450.00	900.00	1,000.00
1,000.00	1,250.00	900.00	1,500.00	900.00	1,800.00	2,000.00

The Cayman Islands Dollar & the U.S. D ollar: At the time of this writing, CI$1 = US$1.25. I nversely stated, US$1 is wor th approximately 80 Caymanian cents.

The Cayman Islands Dollar & the British Pound: At the time of this writing, CI$1 = 90p. Inversely stated, £1 is worth approximately CI$1.10.

The Cayman Islands Dollar & the Canadian Dollar: At the time of this writing, CI$1 = C$1.50. Inversely stated, C$1 is worth approximately 66 Caymanian cents.

The Cayman Islands Dollar & the Australian Dollar: At the time of this writing, CI$1 = A$1.80. Inversely stated, A$1 is worth approximately 55 Caymanian cents.

The Cayman Islands Dollar & the New Zealand Dollar: At the time of this writing, CI$1 = NZ$2. Inversely stated, NZ$1 is worth approximately 50 Caymanian cents.

Frommer's lists exact prices in the local currency; however, hotel rates are quoted in US$ in this guide. The currency conversions quoted above were correct at press time. However, rates fluctuate, so before departing, consult a currency exchange website such as www.oanda.com/convert/classic to check up-to-the-minute rates. Although the rate between the CI$ and the US$ is permanently fixed as part of an international banking agreement, the ratios between the CI$ and other currencies fluctuate, based on frequently changing financial and political factors.

Warning: Be alert about which currency is being quoted at any given time. Hotels tend to quote their rates in U.S. dollars, while restaurants, nightclubs, and gift shops tend to quote their prices in Cayman Islands dollars. We do the same when quoting prices in this guide. Misunderstanding the currency being quoted for any given transaction can be embarrassing and expensive.

It's always advisable to bring money in a variety of forms on a vacation: a mix of cash, credit cards, and traveler's checks. You should also exchange enough petty cash to cover airport incidentals, tipping, and transportation to your hotel before you leave home, or withdraw money upon arrival at an airport ATM.

In many international destinations, ATMs offer the best exchange rates. Avoid exchanging money at commercial exchange bureaus and hotels, which often have the highest transaction fees.

The Cayman Islands are one of the most upmarket destinations in the Caribbean, although prices aren't as sky-high as on the French island of St. Barts or the British-affiliated island of Anguilla. Nevertheless, a frugal traveler will do better in Puerto Rico or the Dominican Republic. The cost of living is about 20% higher in the Cayman Islands than it is in the United States.

Brace yourself for the high prices that resorts charge. There is almost nothing in the budget category. To give you an idea of the

What Things Cost in Grand Cayman	CI$
Taxi from airport to Seven Mile Beach	12.00
Average bus fare	2.00
Lunch for one at Chicken! Chicken! (inexpensive)	7.00
Dinner for one, without wine, at Grand Old House (expensive)	50.00
Dinner for one, without wine, at Bacchus (moderate)	40.00
Dinner for one, without wine, at Al la Kebab (inexpensive)	12.00
Double room, high season, at Ritz-Carlton (very expensive)	368.00
Double room, high season, at Comfort Suites (moderate)	180.00
Double room, high season, at Eldemire's Guest House (inexpensive)	95.00
Half a liter of beer	5.00
Coca-Cola or Pepsi in a restaurant	2.25
Cup of coffee	2.50
Glass of wine	10.00
Movie ticket	12.50

price structure, an "inexpensive" room in Grand Cayman is often one charging under US$150 a night for a double, a price that might buy you a first-class hotel in many parts of America.

Most of the big hotels along Seven Mile Beach don't offer meal plans such as MAP (the Modified American Plan, which includes breakfast and dinner). You'll often have to pay for your food a la carte. Food prices are high since almost everything is imported, but they're not nearly as lofty as the hotel prices; US$20 to US$35 will get you a main course at a typical restaurant. "Budget" would be any restaurant serving main courses for US$18 and under.

ATMS

The easiest and best way to get cash away from home is from an ATM (automated teller machine), sometimes referred to as a "cash machine," or a "cashpoint." The **Cirrus** (✆ **800/424-7787;** www.mastercard.com) and **PLUS** (✆ **800/843-7587;** www.visa.com) networks span the globe. Go to your bank card's website to find ATM locations in the Cayman Islands. Be sure you know your Personal

Tips Show Me the Cash (and Small Change)

When you change money, ask for some small bills or loose change. It's always a good idea to carry around some cash and change for small expenses like cab rides, public transportation, tips, or for when a restaurant or small shop doesn't take plastic, which can happen if you're dining at a neighborhood joint or buying from a small vendor. A supply of CI$80 or US$100 in cash should see you through. Consider keeping the change separate from your larger bills, so it's readily accessible and you'll be less of a target for pickpockets. Remember that U.S. dollars are accepted almost everywhere on the islands.

Identification Number (PIN) and your daily withdrawal limit before you depart. ***Note:*** Many banks impose a fee every time you use a card at another bank's ATM, and that fee can be higher for international transactions (up to US$5 or more) than for domestic ones (where they're rarely more than $2). In addition, the bank from which you withdraw cash may charge its own fee. For international withdrawal fees, ask your bank.

Note: Banks that are members of the **Global ATM Alliance** charge no transaction fees for cash withdrawals at other Alliance member ATMs; these include Bank of America, Scotiabank (Canada, Caribbean, and Mexico), Barclays (U.K. and parts of Africa), Deutsche Bank (Germany, Poland, Spain, and Italy), and BNP Paribas (France).

Although ATMs are hard to come by on Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, banks with ATMs are easy to find in George Town, the capital of Grand Cayman. You can usually request U.S. dollars or Cayman dollars at most banks and ATMs.

CREDIT CARDS

Credit cards are another safe way to carry money. They also provide a convenient record of all your expenses, and they generally offer relatively good exchange rates. You can withdraw cash advances from your credit cards at banks or ATMs, but high fees make credit card cash advances a pricey way to get cash. Keep in mind that you'll pay interest from the moment of your withdrawal, even if you pay your monthly bills on time. Also, note that many banks now assess a 1% to 3% "transaction fee" on **all** charges you incur abroad (whether you're using the local currency or your native currency).

TRAVELER'S CHECKS

You can buy traveler's checks at most banks. They are offered in denominations of US$20, US$50, US$100, US$500, and sometimes US$1,000. Generally, you'll pay a service charge ranging from 1% to 4%.

The most popular traveler's checks are offered by **American Express** (✆ **800/807-6233** or 800/221-7282 for cardholders—this number accepts collect calls, offers service in several foreign languages, and exempts Amex gold and platinum cardholders from the 1% fee); **Visa** (✆ **800/732-1322**—AAA members can obtain Visa checks for a US$9.95 fee for checks up to US$1,500 at most AAA offices or by calling ✆ **866/339-3378**); and **MasterCard** (✆ **800/223-9920**).

Be sure to keep a record of the traveler's checks' serial numbers separate from your checks in the event that they are stolen or lost. You'll get a refund faster if you know the numbers.

American Express, Thomas Cook, Visa, and **MasterCard** offer **foreign currency traveler's checks,** useful if you're traveling to one country or to the Euro zone; they're accepted at locations where dollar checks may not be.

Another option is the new prepaid traveler's check cards, reloadable cards that work much like debit cards, but aren't linked to your checking account. The **American Express Travelers Cheque Card,** for example, requires a minimum deposit, sets a maximum balance, and has a one-time issuance fee of US$14.95. You can withdraw money from an ATM (for a fee of US$2.50 per transaction, not including bank fees), and the funds can be purchased in dollars, euros, or pounds. If you lose the card, your available funds will be refunded within 24 hours.

Tips Dear Visa: I'm Off to Seven Mile Beach!

Some credit card companies recommend that you notify them of any impending trip abroad so that they don't become suspicious when the card is used numerous times in a foreign destination and your charges are blocked. Even if you don't call your credit card company in advance, you can always call the card's toll-free emergency number if a charge is refused—a good reason to carry the phone number with you. But perhaps the most important lesson here is to carry more than one card with you on your trip; a card might not work for any number of reasons, so having a backup is the smart way to go.

6 HEALTH

STAYING HEALTHY

There are no particular health concerns in the Cayman Islands. It is one of the safest destinations in the Caribbean, with the best and most comprehensive facilities found on Grand Cayman.

General Availability of Health Care

Shots are not required before entering the Cayman Islands (see "Medical Requirements" in section 3 of this chapter). While medical facilities are fully developed on Grand Cayman, only adequate clinics are available on Little Cayman or Cayman Brac. If a visitor develops a serious illness while vacationing on the two smaller sibling islands, he or she is quickly airlifted to George Town. Grand Cayman also has a decompression chamber. All victims of scuba-diving accidents in the Cayman Islands are immediately taken or airlifted to this facility.

On Grand Cayman it's easy to get over-the-counter medicine if necessary, less so on Cayman Brac or Little Cayman. If you're visiting these smaller islands, stock up on whatever medication you think you'll need. For details on drugstores, hospitals, and medical emergencies on Grand Cayman, see chapter 11, "Fast Facts". For details on hospitals and clinics on Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, refer to p. 157 and p. 174, respectively.

Pack prescription medications in your carry-on luggage. Carry written prescriptions in generic, not brand-name, form, and dispense all prescription medications from their original labeled vials. Many people try to slip drugs such as cocaine into the Cayman Islands (or pick them up there). Drugs are often placed into a container for prescription medication after the legal medications have been removed. Customs officials are well aware of this type of smuggling and often check medications if they suspect a passenger is bringing illegal drugs into or out of a country.

Common Ailments

See also "Water," in chapter 11, "Fast Facts."

SUN EXPOSURE The Cayman sun can be brutal. Wear sunglasses and a hat, and use sunscreen liberally. Limit your time on the beach during the first day. If you do overexpose yourself, stay out of the sun until you recover. If fever, chills, headache, nausea, or dizziness follow your overexposure to the sun, see a doctor.

BUGS & BITES One of the biggest menaces is the "no-see-ums," which appear mainly in the early evening. You can't see these gnats,

Healthy Travels to You

The following government websites offer up-to-date health-related travel advice.

- **Australia:** www.smartraveller.gov.au
- **Canada:** www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index_e.html
- **U.K.:** www.dh.gov.uk; click on "EHIC & Information for Travellers"
- **U.S.:** www.cdc.gov/travel

but you sure can "feel-um." Mosquitoes are also a nuisance. Window screens don't keep these critters out, so carry bug repellent.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET SICK AWAY FROM HOME

Finding a good doctor in the Cayman Islands is not a problem, and all of them speak English. See chapter 11, "Fast Facts," and chapters 9 and 10 for hospitals and clinics.

For travel abroad, you may have to pay all medical costs upfront and be reimbursed later. Medicare and Medicaid do not provide coverage for medical costs outside the U.S. Before leaving home, find out what medical services your health insurance covers. To protect yourself, consider buying medical travel insurance (see chapter 11, "Fast Facts"). The Cayman Islands and the U.K. do not have a mutual insurance agreement. For U.K. citizens looking for advice on healthy travel and medical insurance, see **www.dh.gov.uk/travellers**.

Very few health insurance plans will pay for medical evacuation back to the U.S. (which can cost US$10,000 and up). A number of companies offer medical evacuation services anywhere in the world. If you're ever hospitalized more than 150 miles from home, **MedjetAssist** (✆ **800/527-7478;** www.medjetassistance.com) will pick you up and fly you to the hospital of your choice virtually anywhere in the world in a medically equipped and staffed aircraft 24 hours day, 7 days a week. Annual memberships are US$225 individual, US$350 family; you can also purchase short-term memberships.

If you suffer from a chronic illness, consult your doctor before your departure. Drugstores and pharmacies are not plentiful, but adequate. They stock most generic drugs; however, if you are on special drugs, it is best to arrive in the Caymans with an adequate supply and not count on local pharmacies. At Cayman hospitals, you will need to be covered by health insurance—or else be prepared to pay in cash or with a credit card.

Contact the **International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers (IAMAT)** (✆ **716/754-4883** or, in Canada, 416/652-0137; www.iamat.org) for tips on travel and health concerns and for lists of local doctors. The United States **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (✆ **800/311-3435;** www.cdc.gov) provides up-to-date information on health hazards by region or country and offers tips on food safety. **Travel Health Online** (www.tripprep.com), sponsored by a consortium of travel medicine providers, may also offer helpful advice on traveling abroad. You can find listings of reliable medical clinics overseas at the **International Society of Travel Medicine** (www.istm.org).

7 SAFETY

Violent crime is rare in the Cayman Islands, but petty thefts, pickpocketing, and purse snatchings occasionally occur. There have been incidents of sexual assault, some reportedly involving the use of so-called "date rape" drugs, such as Rohypnol. To avoid becoming a victim of a crime, visitors should exercise common sense and take basic precautions, including being aware of one's surroundings, not walking alone after dark or in remote areas, and using reasonable caution when offered food or beverages from strangers. Also, gays and lesbians should be aware that discrimination is an issue in the Caymans (see below).

The loss or theft abroad of a passport should be reported immediately to the local police. U.S. citizens may refer to the Department of

Safety & Security for Scuba Divers

On average, one American citizen per month drowns or suffers cardiac arrest while snorkeling or scuba diving in the Cayman Islands. These deaths may be attributed to tourists attempting to do more than they are trained to do or may be due to poor physical fitness or preexisting medical conditions that are exacerbated when snorkeling or diving. Know and respect your limits. Inexperienced or first-time divers should obtain proper training, and may wish to undergo a physical examination before diving. **Divers Alert Network** (✆ **800/446-2671** or 919/684-4326; www.diversalertnetwork.org) insures scuba divers.

State's pamphlet, *A Safe Trip Abroad,* for ways to experience a trouble-free journey. The pamphlet is available by mail from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402; via the Internet at **www.gpoaccess.gov**; or via the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page at http://travel.state.gov.

8 SPECIALIZED TRAVEL RESOURCES

In addition to the destination-specific resources listed below, please visit Frommers.com for additional specialized travel resources.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

Most of the gay and lesbian community regards the Cayman Islands as gay-hostile as opposed to gay-friendly. No island in the Caribbean is completely gay-friendly, even the more liberal destinations like Puerto Rico and St. Croix. But the government of the Cayman Islands has been particularly vocal in expressing its anti-gay attitudes with no apologies for its mindless prejudices.

In 1998 the Cayman Islands government notoriously turned away Norwegian Cruise Lines *Leeward,* which was carrying 900 gay passengers. The tourism directors at George Town stated at the time: "We cannot count on this group to uphold the standards of appropriate behavior expected of visitors to the Cayman Islands." The decision drew massive protest in America, with many groups, even travel agents, discouraging travel to the Cayman Islands or calling for a complete boycott of the Cayman Islands.

Although the government officially sanctioned the ban of the *Leeward,* such intolerance is often not endorsed by individual hotel owners, who have told us privately that they welcome gay and lesbian patronage. Nonetheless, the official attitude doesn't make for a happy vacation, and displays of same-sex affection are severely frowned upon in Cayman Islands society. There are no gay bars or clubs and the local gay and lesbian community congregates privately, within individual homes.

As a gay or lesbian traveler, you have to make a personal choice whether you want to spend your hard-earned vacation dollars in the Cayman Islands or if you would prefer to vacation in friendlier and more tolerant climates.

The **International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA)** (✆ **800/448-8550** or 954/776-2626; www.iglta.org) is the trade association for the gay and lesbian travel industry and offers an online

directory of gay- and lesbian-friendly travel businesses; go to their website and click on "Members."

Many agencies offer tours and travel itineraries specifically for gay and lesbian travelers. Among them are **Above and Beyond Tours** (✆ **800/397-2681;** www.abovebeyondtours.com); **Now, Voyager** (✆ **800/255-6951;** www.nowvoyager.com); and **Olivia Cruises & Resorts** (✆ **800/631-6277;** www.olivia.com). **Gay.com Travel** (✆ **415/644-8044;** www.gay.com/travel or www.outandabout.com), is an excellent online successor to the popular ***OUT&ABOUT*** print magazine. It provides regularly updated information about gay-owned, gay-oriented, and gay-friendly lodging, dining, sightseeing, nightlife, and shopping establishments in every important destination worldwide. British travelers should click on the "Travel" link at **www.gay.co.uk** for advice and gay-friendly trip ideas.

The Canadian website **GayTraveler** (www.gaytraveler.ca) offers ideas and advice for gay travel all over the world.

The following travel guides are available at many bookstores, or you can order them from any online bookseller: ***Spartacus International Gay Guide, 36th Edition*** (Bruno Gmünder Verlag; www.spartacusworld.com/gayguide) and the ***Damron*** guides (www.damron.com), with separate, annual books for gay men and lesbians.

TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Like most islands of the Caribbean, the Cayman Islands should do more to welcome vacationers with disabilities. If you're traveling with a disability, we'd recommend that you confine your visit to Grand Cayman and not the remote "adventure" islands of Cayman Brac or Little Cayman. Your best bet is to check into one of the major resorts along Seven Mile Beach, which are far more accessible than the smaller lodgings on the island. It is always advisable to call the hotel of your choice and personally discuss your needs before booking a vacation.

Organizations that offer a vast range of resources and assistance to travelers with disabilities include **MossRehab** (✆ **800/CALL-MOSS** [2255-6677]; www.mossresourcenet.org), the **American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)** (✆ **800/232-5463** or 212/502-7600; www.afb.org), and **Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality (SATH)** (✆ **212/447-7284;** www.sath.org). **Air Ambulance Card** (✆ **877/424-7633** or 205/297-0060; www.airambulancecard.com) is now partnered with SATH and allows you to preselect top-notch hospitals in case of an emergency.

Access-Able Travel Source (✆ **303/232-2979;** www.access-able.com) offers a comprehensive database on travel agents from around the world with experience in accessible travel; destination-specific access information; and links to such resources as service animals, equipment rentals, and access guides.

Many travel agencies offer customized tours and itineraries for travelers with disabilities. Among them are **Flying Wheels Travel** (✆ **507/451-5005;** www.flyingwheelstravel.com) and **Accessible Journeys** (✆ **800/846-4537** or 610/521-0339; www.disabilitytravel.com).

Flying with Disability (www.flying-with-disability.org) is a comprehensive information source on airplane travel. **Avis Rent a Car** (✆ **800/331-1212** in the U.S.; www.avis.com) has an "Avis Access" program that offers services for customers with special travel needs. These include specially outfitted vehicles with swivel seats, spinner knobs, and hand controls; mobility scooter rentals; and accessible bus service. Be sure to reserve well in advance.

Also check out the quarterly magazine ***Emerging Horizons*** (www.emerginghorizons.com), available by subscription (US$16.95 a year in the U.S.; US$21.95 outside the U.S.).

The "Accessible Travel" link at **Mobility-Advisor.com** offers a variety of travel resources to persons with disabilities.

British travelers should contact **Tourism For All** (✆ **0845/124-9971** in U.K. only; www.tourismforall.org.uk) to access a wide range of travel information and resources for elderly people or persons with disabilities.

FAMILY TRAVEL

The Cayman Islands welcome families with kids. To locate accommodations, restaurants, and attractions that are particularly kid-friendly, refer to the "Kids" icon throughout this guide.

Recommended family travel websites include **Family Travel Forum** (www.familytravelforum.com), a comprehensive site that offers customized trip planning; **Family Travel Network** (www.familytravelnetwork.com), an online magazine providing travel tips; and **TravelWithYourKids.com,** a comprehensive site written by parents and for parents, which provides sound advice for long-distance and international travel with children.

FOR SENIORS

Mention the fact that you're a senior when you make your travel reservations in the Cayman Islands. Members of **AARP,** 601 E St. NW, Washington, DC 20049 (✆ **888/687-2277;** www.aarp.org), get discounts on hotels, air fares, and car rentals. AARP offers members a wide range of benefits, including *AARP The Magazine* and a monthly newsletter. Anyone over 50 can join.

Recommended publications with travel resources and discounts for seniors include: the quarterly magazine ***Travel 50 & Beyond*** (www.travel50andbeyond.com) and ***Unbelievably Good Deals and Great Adventures That You Absolutely Can't Get Unless You're Over 50, 2009–2010, 18th Edition*** (McGraw-Hill), by Joan Rattner Heilman.

General Resources for Green Travel

In addition to the resources for the Cayman Islands listed above, the following websites provide valuable wide-ranging information on sustainable travel. For a list of even more sustainable resources, as well as tips and explanations on how to travel greener, visit www.frommers.com/planning.

- **Responsible Travel** (www.responsibletravel.com) is a great source of sustainable travel ideas; the site is run by a spokesperson for ethical tourism in the travel industry.
- **Sustainable Travel International** (www.sustainabletravelinternational.org) promotes ethical tourism practices and manages an extensive directory of sustainable properties and tour operators around the world.
- In the U.K., **Tourism Concern** (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) works to reduce social and environmental problems connected to tourism. The **Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO)** (www.aito.co.uk) is a group of specialist operators leading the field in making holilidays sustainable.
- In Canada, *Green Living* magazine (www.greenlivingonline.com) has extensive content on how to travel sustainably, including a travel and transport section and profiles of the best green shops and services in Toronto, Vancouver, and Calgary.
- In Australia, the national body that sets guidelines and standards for eco-tourism is **Ecotourism Australia** (www.ecotourism.org.au). **The Green Directory** (www.thegreendirectory.com.au), **Green Pages** (www.thegreenpages.com.au), and **Eco Directory** (www.ecodirectory.com.au)

9 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The spectacular coral reefs that fringe the Cayman Islands are the nation's greatest natural resource. Strict laws prevent cruise ships from dropping anchor in the reefs near George Town and punish any entity caught tampering with the underwater wildlife. Grand Cayman has developed rapidly over the past 30 years, although new laws aim to curb large-scale development. Increasing emphasis is being put on

offer sustainable travel tips and directories of green businesses.

- **Carbonfund.org, TerraPass** (www.terrapass.org), and **Carbon Neutral** (www.carbonneutral.org) provide info on "carbon offsetting," or offsetting the greenhouse gas emitted during flights.
- **"Green" Hotels Association** (www.greenhotels.com) recommends green-rated member hotels around the world that fulfill the company's stringent environmental requirements. **Environmentally Friendly Hotels** (www.environmentallyfriendlyhotels.com) offers more green accommodations ratings. The **Hotel Association of Canada** (www.hacgreenhotels.com) has a Green Key Eco-Rating Program, which audits the environmental performance of Canadian hotels, motels, and resorts.
- **SustainLane** (www.sustainlane.com) lists sustainable eating and drinking choices around the U.S.; also visit www.eatwellguide.org for tips on eating sustainably in the U.S. and Canada.
- For information on animal-friendly issues throughout the world, visit **Tread Lightly** (www.treadlightly.org). For information about the ethics of swimming with dolphins, visit the **Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society** (www.wdcs.org).
- **Volunteer International** (www.volunteerinternational.org) has a list of questions to help you determine the intentions and the nature of a volunteer program. For general info on volunteer travel, visit www.volunteerabroad.org and www.idealist.org.

low-rise construction of beachfront condos. The Ritz-Carlton, built in a series of multistory towers, required a special zoning permission and post-Ritz, these will be incr easingly difficult to obtain. If you'd like to check into the "greenest" hotel on Grand Cayman, head for **Lighthouse Point** (p. 73).

The best eco-tours on Grand Cayman are offered by Geddes Hislop of **Earthfoot's Ecotours.** Arrangements can be made by contacting him at **www.earthfoot.org**. Geddes is a wildlife biologist, and he has a variety of mostly half-day walks and tours, including visits to the

Frommers.com: The Complete Travel Resource

It should go without saying, but we highly recommend **Frommers.com,** voted Best Travel Site by *PC Magazine*. We think you'll find our expert advice and tips; independent reviews of hotels, restaurants, attractions, and preferred shopping and nightlife venues; vacation giveaways; and an online booking tool indispensable before, during, and after your travels. We publish the complete contents of over 128 travel guides in our **Destinations** section, covering nearly 3,800 places worldwide to help you plan your trip. Each weekday, we publish original articles reporting on **Deals & News** via our free **Frommers.com Newsletter** to help you save time and money and travel smarter. We're betting you'll find our **Events** listings (http://events.frommers.com) an invaluable resource; it's an up-to-the-minute roster of what's happening in cities everywhere—including concerts, festivals, lectures, and more. We've also added weekly **Podcasts, interactive maps,** and hundreds of new images across the site. Check out our **Travel Talk** area featuring **Message Boards** where you can join in conversations with thousands of fellow Frommer's travelers and post your trip report once you return.

Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park. His most popular jaunt is a nature walk tour, lasting nearly 5 hours and costing from US$50 to US$55 per person or US$40 to US$45 for ages 12 and under. A guided tour of the botanic park costs US$55 or US$45 per child age 12 and under. Customized tours can also be arranged.

All three of the Caymans are ideal for bike riding, and depending on your plans, you may not need to rent a car at all. Cayman Brac and Little Cayman are easily traversed by bike and many hotels provide them free to their guests. For more information about biking on Grand Cayman, see p. 34. For Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, see p. 157 and 174, respectively.

Each time you take a flight or drive a car, carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere. You can help neutralize this danger to our planet through "carbon offsetting"—paying someone to reduce your carbon dioxide emissions by the same amount you've added. Carbon offsets

can be purchased in the U.S. from companies such as **Carbonfund.org** and **TerraPass** (www.terrapass.org), and from **Climate Care** (www.climatecare.org) in the U.K.

Although one could argue that any vacation that includes an airplane flight can't be truly "green," you can go on holiday and still contribute positively to the environment. You can offset carbon emissions from your flight in other ways. Choose forward-looking companies that embrace responsible development practices, helping preserve destinations for the future by working alongside local people. An increasing number of sustainable tourism initiatives can help you plan a family trip and leave as small a "footprint" as possible on the places you visit.

10 PACKAGES FOR THE INDEPENDENT TRAVELER

Before you start your search for the lowest airfare, you may want to consider booking your flight as part of a travel package. Package tours are not the same thing as escorted tours. Package tours are simply a way to buy the airfare, accommodations, and other elements of your trip (such as car rentals, airport transfers, and sometimes even activities) at the same time and often at discounted prices—kind of like one-stop shopping. In most cases, a package to the Cayman Islands will include air fare, hotel, and transportation to and from the airport—and it'll cost you less than just the hotel alone if you booked it yourself. Packages are sold in bulk to tour operators—who resell them to the public at a cost that usually undercuts standard rates. A package deal might not be for you if you want to stay in a more intimate inn or guesthouse, but if you like resorts, read on.

Many land-and-sea packages include meals, and you might find yourself locked into eating in your hotel dining room every night if your meals are prepaid. If you're seeking a more varied dining experience, avoid **AP** (American Plan), which means full board, and opt for **MAP** (Modified American Plan), meaning breakfast and either lunch or dinner at your hotel.

One good source of package deals is the airlines themselves. Most major airlines offer air/land packages, including **American Airlines Vacations** (✆ **800/321-2121;** www.aavacations.com), **Delta Vacations** (✆ **800/654-6559;** www.deltavacations.com), and **Continental Airlines Vacations** (✆ **800/301-3800;** www.covacations.com). Several big **online travel agencies**—Expedia, Travelocity, Orbitz, and lastminute.com—also do a brisk business in packages. If you're

Tips Ask Before You Go

Before you invest in a package deal or an escorted tour:

- Always ask about the **cancellation policy.** Can you get your money back? Is there a deposit required?
- Ask about the **accommodations choices and prices** for each. Then look up the hotels' reviews in a Frommer's guide and check their rates online for your specific dates of travel. Also find out what types of rooms are offered.
- Request a complete **schedule** (escorted tours only).
- Ask about the **size** and demographics of the group (escorted tours only).
- Discuss what is included in the **price** (transportation, meals, tips, airport transfers, and so forth; escorted tours only).
- Finally, look for **hidden expenses.** Ask whether airport departure fees and taxes, for example, are included in the total cost—they rarely are.

unsure about the pedigree of a smaller packager, check with the Better Business Bureau in the city where the company is based, or go online at www.bbb.org. If a packager won't tell you where it's based, don't fly with them.

Just-A-Vacation Inc. (✆ **301/559-0510;** www.justavacation.com) and Travelocity also specialize in good deals for resorts in the Cayman Islands.

Travel packages are also listed in the travel section of your local Sunday newspaper. Or check ads in national travel magazines such as *Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel Magazine, Travel + Leisure, National Geographic Traveler,* and *Condé Nast Traveller.*

The biggest hotel chains and resorts also have package deals. If you already know where you want to stay, call the resort itself and ask if it offers land/air packages.

To save time comparing the prices and value of all the package tours out there, contact **TourScan Inc.** (✆ **800/962-2080** or 203/655-8091; www.tourscan.com). Every season, the company computerizes the contents of travel brochures that contain about 10,000 different vacations at 1,600 hotels in the Caribbean. TourScan selects the best value vacation at each hotel and condo.

ESCORTED GENERAL INTEREST TOURS

For organized tours around Grand Cayman, see p. 135 in chapter 6. Visitors can enjoy private taxi tours or choose from different half- or full-day sightseeing tours around the island.

11 STAYING CONNECTED

To call the Cayman Islands from the United States or Canada, dial **1,** and then the **345** area code and the local number.

To call the Cayman Islands from the U.K., dial **00,** and then the **345** area code, followed by the number. To call from Australia, dial **0011-1,** and then **345,** followed by the number. From New Zealand, dial **00-1,** and then **345** and the number.

While vacationing, call the U.S. direct by dialing **1,** and then the area code and number. Call Canada by dialing **011,** and then **1,** the area code and number. If you're calling the U.K., dial **011,** and then **44** and the number. To call Australia, dial **011,** and then **61** and the number. To call New Zealand, dial **011,** and then **64** and the number.

Call **411** for directory assistance in the Cayman Islands. Dial **0** for internal and external operator assistance. Phone cards and credit cards can be used to make international calls. Nearly everyone has a cellphone so don't expect to encounter many old-fashioned phone booths.

Note: Numbers beginning with 800 within the Caymans are toll-free, but calling an 800 number in the States from the Caymans is not. In fact, it costs the same as an overseas call.

Major hotels throughout the Cayman Islands are fully capable of routing your phone calls to any destination in the world. Select hotels will directly transfer your call through a switchboard; others allow dialing with a locally purchased calling card, or you can direct-dial from your hotel room. Note that surcharges usually apply for calls directly dialed from within your hotel.

CELLPHONES

Much of the world's wireless capabilities are defined by **GSM** (Global System for Mobile Communications) and **TDMA** (Time Division Multiple Access), the big digital networks that make for easy cross-border cellphone use throughout dozens of countries worldwide. They function with a removable plastic SIM card, encoded with your phone number and account information. If your cellphone is on a GSM or TDMA system, and you have a world-capable multiband

phone, you can make and receive calls across populated areas around much of the globe. Just call your wireless operator and ask for "international roaming" to be activated on your account. A prepaid Cayman Islands SIM card with an international cellphone is a convenient and economical calling solution during your visit to the Caymans.

To an increasing degree, residents of the Cayman Islands—especially the islands' corps of taxi and minivan drivers—rely on their cellphones for all manner of communications throughout their working days. Cellphone reception, thanks to relay stations scattered throughout Grand Cayman, is generally very good—but somewhat less so on Little Cayman and Cayman Brac. Temporary visitors to the Cayman Islands can buy or rent a cellphone from providers including: **Cable & Wireless,** Anderson Square Building on Shedden Road, and Galleria Shopping Mall at Seven Mile Beach, George Town (✆ **345/949-7800;** www.cw.ky); **Digicel,** Cayman Financial Center, 36A Dr. Roy's Dr., 3rd floor, George Town (✆ **345/623-3444;** www.digicelcayman.com/en/plans); and **Lime,** Anderson Square Building on Shedden Road, and Galleria Plaza on West Bay Road, George Town (✆ **345/949-8450;** www.time4lime.com). Rentals are about CI$5 per day, plus the cost of a calling card; international per-minute rates are around CI35¢ to CI60¢.

An alternative plan is to rent a cellphone before you leave home. North Americans can rent one before leaving home from **InTouch USA** (✆ **800/872-7626;** www.intouchglobal.com) or **Roadpost** (✆ **888/290-1616** or 905/272-5665; www.roadpost.com). InTouch will also, for free, advise you on whether your existing phone will work overseas; simply call ✆ **703/222-7161** between 9am and 4pm EST, or go to **http://intouchglobal.com/travel.htm**.

If you have Web access while traveling, you might consider a broadband-based telephone service (in technical terms, **Voice over Internet protocol,** or **VoIP**) such as **Skype** (www.skype.com) or **Vonage** (www.vonage.com), which allows you to make free international calls if you use their services from your laptop or in a cybercafe. For all the details on restrictions and availability, check their websites for details.

INTERNET & E-MAIL

Internet cafes are located in the shopping centers along Seven Mile Beach. They include: **Café del Sol/Team Café,** located in the Marquee Shopping Centre and the Aqua World Duty Free Mall (✆ **345/946-2233**); and the **Thirsty Surfer,** located at the Reef Resort in East End (✆ **345/947-2337**). Rates at the Thirsty Surfer range from CI$8 for 24-hour unlimited access to CI$50 for 30-day unlimited access. On Cayman Brac, Internet access is available at the

Online Traveler's Toolbox

Veteran travelers usually carry some essential items to make their trips easier. Following is a selection of handy online tools to bookmark and use.

- **Cayman Islands Department of Tourism** (www.caymanislands.ky)
- **Nature Cayman** (www.naturecayman.com)
- **Professional Association of Diving Instructors** (www.padi.com)
- **Airplane Food** (www.airlinemeals.net)
- **Airplane Seating** (www.seatguru.com and www.airlinequality.com)
- **Maps** (www.mapquest.com and http://maps.google.com)
- **Time and Date** (www.timeanddate.com)
- **Travel Warnings** (http://travel.state.gov, www.fco.gov.uk/travel, www.voyage.gc.ca, or www.smartraveller.gov.au)
- **Universal Currency Converter** (www.xe.com/ucc)
- **Visa ATM Locator** (www.visa.com), **MasterCard ATM Locator** (www.mastercard.com)
- **Weather** (www.intellicast.com and www.weather.com)

West End Post Office and at Brac Reef Beach Resort (see "Fast Facts" in chapter 9). On Little Cayman, only **Wi-Fi** (wireless fidelity) is available (see "Fast Facts" in chapter 10). For more information, check **www.cybercaptive.com** and **www.cybercafe.com**.

More and more hotels, resorts, airports, cafes, and retailers are going Wi-Fi, becoming "hotspots" that offer free high-speed Wi-Fi access or charge a small fee for usage. Most laptops sold today have built-in wireless capability. Public Wi-Fi hotspots in the Cayman Islands are at the **Hard Rock Cafe** (43 S. Church St., George Town ✆ **345/945-2020**) and **Owen Roberts International Airport.** For more information, go to **www.jiwire.com**; its Hotspot Finder holds the world's largest directory of public wireless hotspots.

For dial-up access, most business-class hotels offer dataports for laptop modems.

Wherever you go, bring a **connection kit** of the right power and phone adapters, a spare phone cord, and a spare Ethernet network cable—or find out whether your hotel supplies them to guests.

12 TIPS ON ACCOMMODATIONS

The government of the Cayman Islands imposes a 10% surcharge on all hotel room rentals, which is included in the price.

Hotels also charge a room tax. Sometimes the room tax depends on the quality of the hotel—it might be relatively low for a guesthouse but steeper for a first-class resort. When booking a room, make sure you understand whether the price you've been quoted includes the room tax (which is different from the 10% hotel room surcharge), so that you avoid an unpleasant surprise when it comes time to pay the bill.

Furthermore, most hotels routinely add 10% to 12% for "service," even if you didn't see much evidence of it. That means that with tax and service, some bills are 17% or even 25% higher than the price that was originally quoted! Naturally, you need to determine just how much the hotel, guesthouse, or inn plans to add to your bill at the end of your stay, and whether it's included in the initial price.

That's not all. Some hotels slip in little hidden extras that mount quickly. For example, it's common for many places to quote rates that include a continental breakfast. Should you prefer ham and eggs, however, you will pay extra charges. If you request special privileges, like extra towels for the beach, beach chairs, or laundry done in a hurry, surcharges may mount. It pays to watch those extras and to ask questions before you commit.

HOTELS & RESORTS Many budget travelers assume they can't afford the big hotels and resorts. But with so many packages out there and frequent sales, even in winter you might be pleasantly surprised.

The rates given in this book are "rack rates"—that is, the officially posted rate that you'd be given if you just walked in off the street. Almost everyone ends up paying less than the rack rate through packages, bargaining, and discounts. Think of the rates in this book as guidelines to help you comparison-shop.

Some hotels are often quite flexible about their rates, and many offer discounts and upgrades whenever they have a big block of rooms to fill and few reservations. The smaller hotels and inns are not as likely to be generous with discounts, much less upgrades. A good travel agent may know which hotels have reduced their rates and can help you save serious money.

CONDOS, VILLAS & COTTAGES Particularly if you're traveling with your family or a group of friends, a "housekeeping holiday" can be one of the least expensive ways to vacation in the Caymans. And if you like privacy and independence, it's a good way to go.

Accommodations with kitchens are available on all the islands. Some are individual cottages, others are condo complexes with swimming pools, and some are private homes that owners rent out while they're away.

In the simpler rentals, you do your own cooking and laundry and, in a few cases, your own housekeeping. This may not be your idea of a good time in the sun, but it saves money—a lot of money. The savings, especially for a group of three to six people, can range from 50% to 60% of what a hotel would cost. Groceries are sometimes priced 35% to 60% higher than on the U.S. mainland, as nearly all foodstuffs have to be imported, but even so, preparing your own food will be a lot cheaper than taking all your meals at restaurants.

Most villas, condos, and cottages have a staff, or at least a maid who comes in a few days a week, and they also provide the essentials, including linens and housewares. Many places (though not all) include maid service and fresh linens in the price. Condos usually come with a reception desk and are often comparable to a suite in a big resort hotel. Nearly all condo and villa complexes have pools (some more than one). Like condos, villas range widely in price and may begin at US$750 per week for a modest one and go over US$50,000 a week for a luxurious one.

You can also rent a lavish private home. You'll spend a lot of money, but you'll be staying in the lap of luxury in a prime beachfront setting, usually with maid service (though you may need to arrange this in advance).

Approach all these rental properties with a certain sense of independence. There may or may not be a front desk with someone to answer your questions, and you will most likely have to plan your own watersports activities and excursions. Always ask when you book.

Make your reservations well in advance. We've listed a few agencies that rent condos, villas, and private homes throughout the Caymans. You can also ask each island's tourist office for suggestions on rental agencies. Below are some additional resources for condo and villa rentals throughout the Caymans.

- **Cayman Villas,** 177 Owen Roberts Dr., Grand Cayman (✆ **800/235-5888** in the U.S., or 345/945-4144; www.caymanvillas.com), is a booking agency that specializes in renting more than 100 private beachfront homes and condos on all three islands. The properties range from cozy studio cottages to large villas that have as many as five to seven bedrooms. Some properties have the added luxury of a private pool or a maid, and sometimes even a cook. Most of the rentals have kitchenettes, Internet access, a washer and

dryer, and kitchenware. The range is from budget to deluxe, so most pocketbooks can be accommodated. Rentals range from US$150 to US$2,000 per night.

- **Villas of Distinction** (✆ **800/289-0900** in the U.S.; www.villasofdistinction.com) offers upscale private villas with one to six bedrooms and a pool throughout the Caymans. From town houses to beachfront villas, all their lodgings are beautifully furnished.
- **Hideaways Aficionado** (✆ **888/843-4433** in the U.S., or 603/430-4433; fax 603/430-4444; www.hideaways.com) publishes *Hideaways Collection,* a pictorial directory of home rentals throughout the world, including the Cayman Islands. Rentals range from cottages to staffed villas. Hideaways International can also help you charter yachts and arrange cruises, flights, car rentals, and hotel reservations. Annual membership is US$195.

SAVING ON YOUR HOTEL ROOM

The **rack rate** is the maximum rate that a hotel charges for a room. Hardly anybody pays this price, however, except in high season or on holidays. To lower the cost of your room:

- **Ask about special rates or other discounts.** You may qualify for corporate, student, military, senior, frequent-flier, trade union, or other discounts.
- **Dial direct.** When booking a room in a chain hotel, you'll often get a better deal by calling the individual hotel's reservation desk rather than the chain's main number.
- **Book online.** Many hotels offer Internet-only discounts, or supply rooms to Priceline, Hotwire, or Expedia at rates much lower than the ones you can get through the hotel itself.
- **Remember the law of supply and demand.** You can save big on hotel rooms by traveling during a destination's off season or shoulder seasons, when rates typically drop, even at luxury properties.
- **Look into group or long-stay discounts.** If you come as part of a large group, you should be able to negotiate a bargain rate. Likewise, if you're planning a long stay (at least 5 days), you might qualify for a discount. As a general rule, expect 1 night free after a 7-night stay.
- **Sidestep excess surcharges and hidden costs.** Many hotels have adopted the unpleasant practice of nickel-and-diming its guests with opaque surcharges. When you book a room, ask what is included in the room rate, and what is extra. Avoid dialing direct from hotel phones, which can have exorbitant rates. And don't be tempted by the room's minibar offerings: Most hotels charge through the nose for water, soda, and snacks.

- **Consider the pros and cons of all-inclusive resorts and hotels.** The term "all-inclusive" means different things at different hotels. Many all-inclusive hotels include three meals daily, sports equipment, spa entry, and other amenities; others may include most alcoholic drinks. In general, you'll save money going the "all-inclusive" way—as long as you use the facilities provided. The downside is that your choices are limited and you're stuck eating and playing in one place for the duration of your vacation.
- **Carefully consider your hotel's meal plan.** If you enjoy eating out and sampling the local cuisine, it makes sense to choose a **Continental Plan (CP),** which includes breakfast only, or a **European Plan (EP),** which doesn't include any meals and allows you maximum flexibility. If you're more interested in saving money, opt for a **Modified American Plan (MAP),** which includes breakfast and one meal, or the **American Plan (AP),** which includes three meals. If you must choose a MAP, see if you can get a free lunch at your hotel if you decide to do dinner out.
- **Book an efficiency.** A room with a kitchenette allows you to shop for groceries and cook your own meals. This is a big money saver, especially for families on long stays.
- **Consider enrolling in hotel chains' "frequent-stay" programs,** which are upping the ante lately to win the loyalty of repeat customers. Frequent guests can now accumulate points or credits to earn free hotel nights, airline miles, in-room amenities, merchandise, tickets to concerts and events, and discounts on sporting facilities. Perks are awarded not only by many chain hotels and motels (Hilton HHonors, Marriott Rewards, Wyndham ByRequest, to name a few), but also by individual inns and B&Bs. Many chain hotels partner with other hotel chains, car rental firms, airlines, and credit card companies to give consumers additional incentive to do repeat business.

LANDING THE BEST ROOM

Somebody has to get the best room in the house. It might as well be you. You can start by joining the hotel's frequent-guest program, which may make you eligible for upgrades. A hotel-branded credit card usually gives its owner "silver" or "gold" status in frequent-guest programs for free. Always ask about a corner room. They're often larger and quieter, with more windows and light, and they often cost the same as standard rooms. When you make your reservation, ask if the hotel is renovating; if it is, request a room away from the construction. Ask about nonsmoking rooms and rooms with views. Be sure to request your choice of twin, queen- or king-size beds. If you're a light

Getting Married in the Cayman Islands

If you want to take the plunge and get married on these sun-dappled islands, there's some red tape. Visitors have to call ahead and arrange for an authorized person to marry them. The name of the "marriage officer," as the person is called, has to appear on the application for a marriage license. The application for a special marriage license costs US$180 and can be obtained from the **Chief Secretary's Office,** Fourth Floor, Government Administration Building, George Town (✆ **345/949-7900**). There is no waiting period. Present a birth certificate, the embarkation/disembarkation cards issued by the island's immigration authorities, and, if applicable, divorce decrees or proof of a prior spouse's death.

The Cayman Islands are one of the few Caribbean destinations that allow U.S. citizens to marry the same day they arrive, instead of requiring a minimum on-island stay before the wedding. A brochure, *Getting Married in the Cayman Islands,* is available from **Government Information Services,** Broadcasting House, Grand Cayman (✆ **345/949-8092;** fax 345/949-5936).

The Cayman Islands are a wedding-friendly destination. (See "The Best Honeymoon & Wedding Accommodations," p. 8, for specific resorts with wedding and honeymoon packages.) The host hotel or a wedding service can handle all ground arrangements. Wedding service companies can

sleeper, ask for a quiet room away from vending or ice machines, elevators, restaurants, bars, and discos. Ask for a room that has been recently renovated or refurbished.

If you aren't happy with your room when you arrive, ask for another one. Most lodgings will be willing to accommodate you.

You might ask the following questions before booking a room:

- **What's the view like?** Cost-conscious travelers may be willing to pay less for a back room facing the parking lot, especially if they don't plan to spend much time in their room.
- **Does the room have air-conditioning or ceiling fans? Do the windows open?** If they do, and the nighttime entertainment takes place alfresco, you may want to find out when showtime is over.

perform all the necessary functions related to the ceremony, providing musicians, catering, flowers, and photography, as well as the marriage application with the civil registrar or marriage officer.

Celebrations, P.O. Box 10599 APO (✆ **345/949-2044;** fax 345/949-6947; www.celebrationsltd.com), is an excellent wedding planner, offering packages ranging from US$800 to US$3,000-plus. Bridal packages include everything from prerecorded wedding music to a personal wedding coordinator on the day of the grand event.

Competitor **Cayman Weddings,** P.O. Box 678 GT (✆ **345/949-8677;** fax 345/949-8237; www.caymanweddings.com.ky), is another good choice, with packages starting at US$625 and going up into the stratosphere for deluxe weddings. You get such thoughtful extras as 36 candid photographs, two crystal memento glasses, and a two-tier wedding cake.

After arrival, rest, and perhaps a rehearsal dinner, guests usually convene the following day for a sumptuous island-style wedding. Choose from many romantic, tropical locations: a hotel, chapel, or church; the Caymanian-style Bride House; a beach at sunset; an oceanfront gazebo; a waterside restaurant; or perhaps the depths of the ocean (underwater weddings are extremely popular with divers).

- **What's included in the price?** Your room may be moderately priced, but if you're charged for beach chairs, towels, sports equipment, and other amenities, you could end up spending more than you bargained for.
- **How far is the room from the beach and other amenities?** If it's far, is there transportation to and from the beach, and is it free?

SURFING FOR HOTELS

In addition to the online travel booking sites **Travelocity, Expedia, Orbitz, Priceline,** and **Hotwire,** you can book hotels through **Hotels.com, Quikbook** (www.quikbook.com), and **Travelaxe** (www.travelaxe.net).

HotelChatter (www.hotelchatter.com) is a daily w ebzine offering smart coverage and critiques of hotels worldwide. Go to **TripAdvisor.com** or **HotelShark.com** for helpful independent consumer r eviews of hotels and resort properties.

It's a good idea to **get a confirmation number** and **make a printout** of any online booking transaction.

In surfing the I nternet for hotels in the Cayman I slands, you can often find some very good scuba-diving packages, especially from late April to mid-December.

3

Where to Stay on Grand Cayman

The good news: The Cayman Islands have some of the finest and most elegant resorts in the Caribbean, opening onto one of the grandest strips of sand in the entire Caribbean Basin.

Now for the bad news: The cost of living here is about 20% higher than in the United States. Winter vacations in the Caymans can be pricey affairs. Because so much food has to be imported from the U.S. mainland, restaurant tabs are second only to the high-priced French islands such as St. Barts and Martinique.

But you can make a trip here affordable. The key is to plan in advance and to visit the islands between mid-April and mid-December, when room rates are 20% to 40% lower than in winter. In addition, you might consider staying in one of several low-cost or moderately priced lodgings that have opened in recent years. Many of these accommodations include facilities for cooking simple meals. Depending on where you come from, however, so-called moderate or inexpensive hotels in the Cayman Islands might be judged "super-expensive" in other parts of the world, including the United States.

Nearly all the hotels on Grand Cayman are lined up along Seven Mile Beach and all of its glitter. Hotels out on the island will be more isolated, but may not front a hospitable sand beach. Unlike many Caymanian restaurants, hotels quote prices in U.S. dollars. **All prices in this chapter are quoted in U.S. dollars.** When choosing a hotel, keep in mind that the quoted rates do not include the 10% government tax and the 10% hotel service tax.

Consider booking a package tour to make expensive resorts more affordable. See "Packages for the Independent Traveler," p. 49, before you book. Before browsing through this chapter, see "Tips on Accommodations," p. 54, for descriptions of various lodgings and tips on saving money.

1 HOTELS & RESORTS

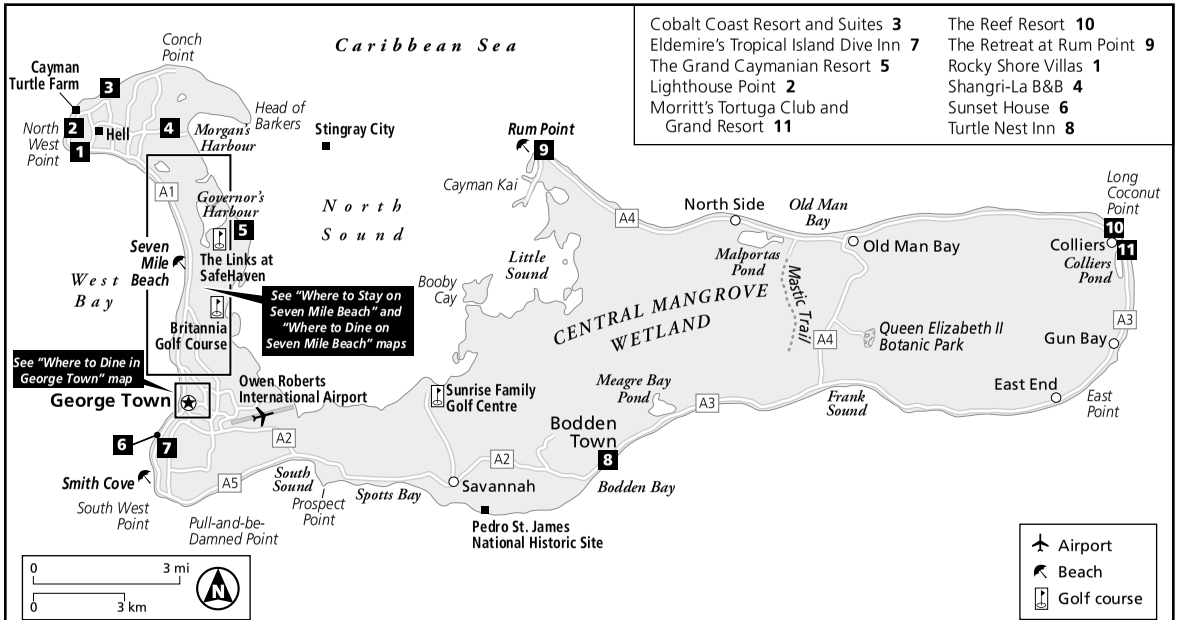
VERY EXPENSIVE

Grand Cayman Beach Suites ★ (Kids) This stylish all-suite resort is set directly on the sands of Seven Mile Beach. The property originated as part of a 36-hectare (89-acre) resort development. The beach suites—originally conceived as an afterthought to a larger resort—are some of the most sought-after accommodations on Grand Cayman. And although the land on which the truncated resort sits is relatively compact, the owners have placed lots of distractions and diversions on-site, including two restaurants and direct access to the beach. Rooms are well appointed and have private verandas with views of the sea. Each suite is compact, yet artfully designed. Restaurants are nearby; there are also some convenient markets if you want to cook inside your suite.

Seven Mile Beach (P.O. Box 32348), George Town, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **345/949-1234.** Fax 345/949-8528. www.grand-cayman-beach-suites.com. 53 units. Winter US$550–US$650 1-bedroom suite, US$900–US$1,150 2-bedroom suite; off season US$275–US$375 1-bedroom suite, US$600–US$700 2-bedroom suite. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants, including Hemingway's (see review, p. 87), 4 bars; babysitting; children's programs; golf course (9 holes); health club & spa; 2 outdoor pools. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (US$13 per day).

The Ritz-Carlton ★★★ (Kids) With amenities and a service level that's rivaled only by the Westin, the Ritz-Carlton is the largest, plushest, most prestigious, most spectacular, and most awe-inspiring resort in the Cayman Islands. In a league and a class of its own, this property defies comparison to virtually everything else on Grand Cayman. And unless you make a concentrated effort to explore other parts of the island, it's very easy, once you've checked in, never to venture beyond its boundaries. The whole resort is set atop 58 hectares (143 acres) that cover the entire width of the island, from Seven Mile Beach to North Sands.

Straddling the boulevard that parallels Seven Mile Beach, the resort is divided into two regal and very large, but distinctly separate buildings—each painted the color of sand. Binding the components together is a climate-controlled catwalk that stretches above the congested rush-hour traffic of West Bay Street. Thanks to a changing array of artwork, elaborate soundproofing, and the fact that the windows of the catwalk are inset with frosted glass, you'll have absolutely no sense of the workaday world below. Everything is climate-controlled, meticulously manicured, and covered with marble, stone, expensive hardwoods, or ultra-plush wall-to-wall carpeting. No other


Cobalt Coast Resort and Suites 3
Eldemire's Tropical Island Dive Inn 7
The Grand Caymanian Resort 5
Lighthouse Point 2
Morritt's Tortuga Club and Grand Resort 11
The Reef Resort 10
The Retreat at Rum Point 9
Rocky Shore Villas 1
Shangri-La B&B 4
Sunset House 6
Turtle Nest Inn 8
Caribbean Sea
Conch Point
Cayman Turtle Farm
North West Point
Hell
Morgan's Harbour
Head of Barkers
Stingray City
Rum Point
Cayman Kai
North Side
Old Man Bay
Long Coconut Point
Colliers
Colliers Pond
Old Man Bay
Governor's Harbour
North Sound
Seven Mile Beach
West Bay
The Links at SafeHaven
See "Where to Stay on Seven Mile Beach" and "Where to Dine on Seven Mile Beach" maps
Britannia Golf Course
Booby Cay
Little Sound
Malportas Pond
Mastic Trail
CENTRAL MANGROVE WETLAND
Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park
Gun Bay
East End
East Point
Frank Sound
Meagre Bay Pond
See "Where to Dine in George Town" map
George Town
Owen Roberts International Airport
Sunrise Family Golf Centre
Bodden Town
Smith Cove
South West Point
Pull-and-be-Damned Point
South Sound
Prospect Point
Spotts Bay
Savannah
Bodden Bay
Pedro St. James National Historic Site
A1
A2
A3
A4
A5
0 3 mi
0 3 km
Airport
Beach
Golf course

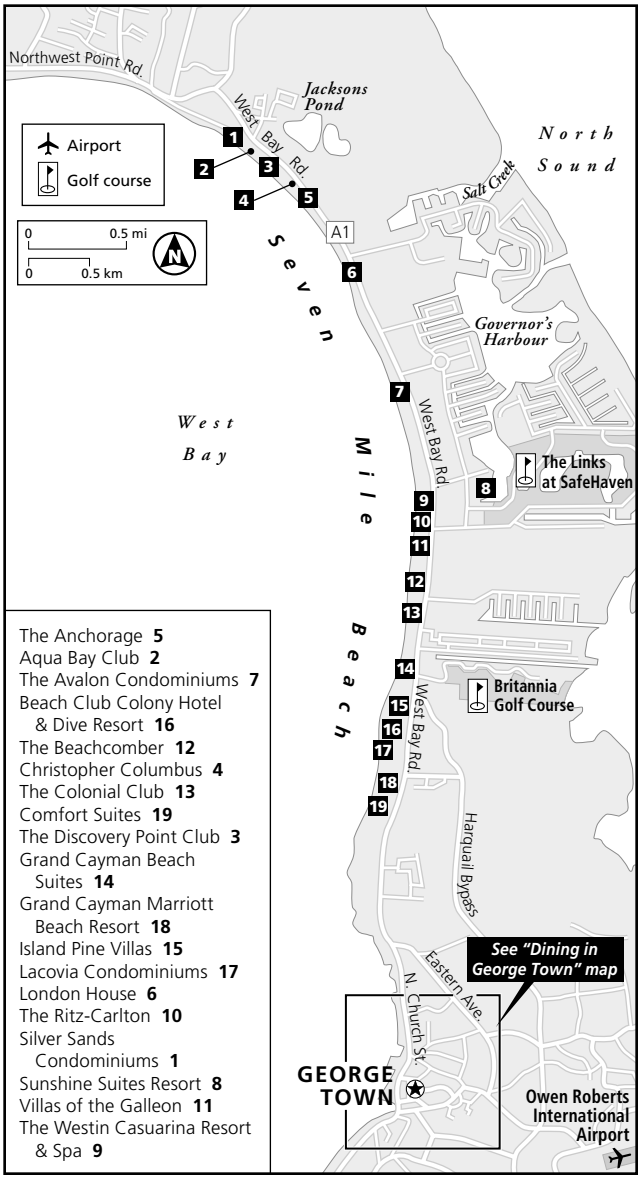
hotel in the Cayman Islands so effectively evokes Europe in the tropics. At its best, this is a richly decorated, sedate, and very expensive architectural fantasy that's run by a bright, hardworking, and polite staff. At its worst, it is bone-chillingly expensive, with hidden fees everywhere, as many visitors are apt to discover upon checkout.

You expect—and get—accommodations with elegant and tasteful furnishings that remind you of a hotel in an expensive neighborhood of London. All the rooms are blissful, but the Residential Suites are an especially luxurious collection of two dozen oceanfront condos with large living and dining areas and wide terraces.

West Bay Rd., Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **800/241-3333** or 345/943-9000. Fax 345/943-9001. www.ritzcarlton.com. 365 units. Winter US$459–US$959 double, from US$1,100 suite; off season US$299–US$499 double, from US$599 suite. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants, 2 bars; babysitting; children's programs; concierge; golf course; health club & spa; 2 outdoor pools; room service; extensive watersports equipment/rentals. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, movie library, CD player, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

The Westin Casuarina Resort & Spa ★★ (Kids) After the Ritz, this is the best-accessorized, most elegant, and plushest resort in the Cayman Islands. Well choreographed and tasteful, this five-story blockbuster is, by anyone's standards, a very fine and well-managed property. Set directly astride the sands of Seven Mile Beach, the Westin is filled with artfully landscaped gardens; plenty of facilities, including a dive shop; and a beautiful oval-shaped swimming pool that, until it was surpassed in size by one of the pools at the Ritz, was the largest on Grand Cayman. Most of the bedrooms have French doors that open onto private balconies, and conservative but attractive furnishings. Units are a bit small for such a luxury hotel, but are well equipped and very comfortable; bathrooms are a bit less upscale, considering the overall elegance of the hotel, but all have marble trim and oversize tubs. Thanks to the building's layout in the form of a giant U, about two-thirds of the units have sea views, a higher percentage than at the Ritz-Carlton, although the others simply look out on the parking lot and West Bay Road. Ask questions when you reserve to avoid the view of your rental car.

West Bay Rd. (P.O. Box 30620), Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **800/937-8461** in the U.S., or 345/945-3800. Fax 345/949-5825. www.westincasuarina.com. 343 units. Winter US$390–US$550 double, from US$1,050–US$3,150 suite; off season US$309–US$529 double, from US$735–US$1,390 suite. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants, 3 bars; children's programs; concierge; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (US$13 per day).


Northwest Point Rd.
Jacksons Pond
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North Sound
Airport
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Salt Creek
A1
Seven Mile Beach
Governor's Harbour
West Bay
West Bay Rd.
The Links at SafeHaven
Britannia Golf Course
Harquail Bypass
See "Dining in George Town" map
Eastern Ave.
N Church St.
GEORGE TOWN
Owen Roberts International Airport
The Anchorage 5
Aqua Bay Club 2
The Avalon Condominiums 7
Beach Club Colony Hotel & Dive Resort 16
The Beachcomber 12
Christopher Columbus 4
The Colonial Club 13
Comfort Suites 19
The Discovery Point Club 3
Grand Cayman Beach Suites 14
Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort 18
Island Pine Villas 15
Lacovia Condominiums 17
London House 6
The Ritz-Carlton 10
Silver Sands Condominiums 1
Sunshine Suites Resort 8
Villas of the Galleon 11
The Westin Casuarina Resort & Spa 9

EXPENSIVE

Beach Club Colony Hotel & Dive Resort We like to think of this resort as a beach club for nondivers. Directly on the sands of Seven Mile Beach, the Beach Club Colony has fewer organized activities than its dive-focused competitors and none of the extensive brouhaha associated with underwater marine hobbies—although certified divers can still enjoy generous dive packages and free shore diving. For those interested, the on-site dive shop can schedule night dives and trips to Stingray City, along with diving courses. All 41 units are efficiently decorated, comfortable but not particularly plush, although each has a terrace or patio. The on-site restaurant is one of the friendliest hangouts on Seven Mile Beach, and makes for a great lunchtime retreat from the sun. Rates are all-inclusive and even include nonmotorized watersports activities.

West Bay Rd. (P.O. Box 903GT), Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **800/48-2DIVE** (23483) in the U.S., or 345/949-8100. Fax 345/949-5167. http://www.beachclubcolony.ky. 41 units. Winter US$210–US$260 per person double; off season US$176–US$184 per person double. Children ages 7–12 US$75, ages 13–17 US$80 each per night, in parent's room. Rates are all-inclusive. Diving packages available. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant, bar; babysitting; outdoor pool; watersports equipment/rentals. *In room:* A/C, TV, Internet ($3 for 15 min.).

Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort ★ Kids It may be way down in the pecking order from the Ritz-Carlton and the Westin Casuarina, but this five-story resort on Seven Mile Beach is still among the island's top-ranked hotels. A favorite with large package-tour groups and conventions, it's a 5-minute drive north of George Town. Its ochre-colored, vaguely Hispanic-designed buildings contain roofed loggias that open onto views of the sea, a verdantly landscaped interior courtyard, or the side of the hotel. Regrettably, the complex sits astride a relatively narrow portion of Seven Mile Beach, a fact that contributes to a densely populated strip of sand immediately in front of the hotel, and just a bit too much congestion around the swimming pool. But there's plenty to do at this family-friendly resort, with lots of emphasis on organized activities. The resort has its own watersports facilities, including a dive shop, with good snorkeling a mere 15m (49 ft.) offshore. Each of the spacious units has been remodeled and has modern art, dark-grained wood furniture, pastel walls, tropical-patterned fabrics, large closets, and a private balcony.

389 West Bay Rd. (P.O. Box 30371), Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **888/236-2427** in the U.S., or 345/949-0088. Fax 345/949-0288. www.marriott.com. 297 units. Winter US$295–US$516 double, US$650 junior suite, US$1,090 1-bedroom suite, US$1,600 2-bedroom suite; off season US$160–US$320 double, US$310–US$550 junior suite, US$500–US$820 1-bedroom suite, US$800–US$1,250 2-bedroom suite. 10% surcharge applies over Christmas. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:**

Kids Family-Friendly Lodgings

The Discovery Point Club (p. 74) This series of condos allows families to create a home away from home on Grand Cayman. Children under 12 stay free in the parent's room and cribs and rollaways are provided when needed. In the main lobby, the hotel has games, and kids can watch videos.

The Grand Caymanian Resort (p. 68) Families can create an "instant home" in these spacious, well-furnished apartments that feature well-equipped kitchens for home-cooked meals. The staff organizes many activities for kids.

Silver Sands Condominiums (p. 77) Right on the beach, this complex of apartments allows large families to lodge all in one place (their accommodations house up to eight people) and to prepare meals in their own fully equipped kitchen. Children up to age 12 also stay free with parents.

Villas of the Galleon (p. 77) This is a family favorite on Seven Mile Beach, which provides such extras as cribs. Families meet other families at the popular outdoor grill.

3 restaurants, 2 bars; babysitting; children's programs; concierge; small health club w/Jacuzzi; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hairdryer, Wi-Fi (US$13 per day).

MODERATE

Cobalt Coast Resort and Suites ★★ Finds Fans of this resort liken it to a contemporary B&B where most clients are deeply involved with diving. It's one of the best resorts for divers on Grand Cayman, thanks to the on-site, full-service dive operation (**Divetech,** p. 109), and a deep drop-off (the North Wall), a short distance offshore, that's loaded with marine life. You have to drive through Hell (p. 123) to get there, though. Don't expect a sand beach: The coastline on this part of the island is infamously composed of jagged rocks, and swimmers use a series of ladders and metal steps to lower themselves into the surf. Even the diving boats have to moor at the end of an extensive pier to avoid damage. Rooms include oceanfront suites and standard rooms, which are all spacious, modern, cozy, and soothing, with Marimekko fabrics from Finland and European plumbing fixtures. On-site is a well-managed, well-run restaurant, **Duppies,**

which serves well-prepared light fare, including platters of local food and sandwiches.

18 Seafan Dr., West Bay, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **888/946-5656** or 345/946-5656. Fax 345/946-5657. www.cobaltcoast.com or www.divetech.com. 18 units. Winter US$270 double, US$330 1-bedroom suite for 2, US$530 2-bedroom suite or villa for 4; off season US$250 double, US$290 1-bedroom suite for 2, US$475 2-bedroom suite or villa for 4. Dive packages available. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant, bar; free airport transfers; Jacuzzi; watersports equipment/rentals. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Comfort Suites Streamlined, efficient, and relatively cost-effective, this hotel is often cited as one of the less expensive accommodations along Seven Mile Beach. Rising five sand-colored stories above the southern end of the fabled beach, it follows a time-tested, generic, and familiar layout that has proven successful in hundreds of other locations within North America. Each of the comfortable bedrooms has a large writing table, a boon to business travelers, and is comfortably but predictably outfitted in tones of blue and white. Unfortunately, none of the rooms has a balcony or veranda to let the light in, and only some have worthwhile views. But all units have refrigerators, coffeemakers, and microwaves. One- and two-bedroom suites also contain stoves and dishwashers. There's a small pool, direct access to the beach along a sandy footpath, and a simple restaurant and bar set beneath the palm fronds of an open-sided *bohio* (hut) beside the pool. The more extensive bar and restaurant choices of the also-recommended Marriott lay immediately next door.

West Bay Rd., Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **800/517-4000** in the U.S., or 345/945-7300. Fax 345/945-7400. www.caymancomfort.com. 108 units. Winter US$225–US$325 studio, US$250–US$385 1-bedroom suite, US$385–US$410 2-bedroom suite; off season US$165–US$195 studio, US$245–US$305 1-bedroom suite, US$315–US$345 2-bedroom suite. Rates include breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant, bar; babysitting; bikes; exercise room; Jacuzzi; watersports equipment/rentals. *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchenette (in studios), kitchen (in suites), hair dryer, Internet (free).

The Grand Caymanian Resort ★★ (Kids) This is the most upscale apartment-hotel resort on the North Sound. This government-rated five-star facility was originally built on scrubland that had been shunned by many other developers.

Within a short drive of the island's biggest golf course, facing the rocky beachfront of North Sound, you'll find an opulent cluster of beige-yellow apartments, each designed in a modernized version of the British colonial style. Accommodations occupy a series of two- and three-story wings, and furnishings in each unit are more elegant than the major resort competitors. The granite-trimmed private kitchens are genuinely plush. Sound-insulated doors can be locked

and unlocked to allow configurations of units ranging from studios to full-blown two-bedroom suites. Each bedroom contains a veranda or balcony. The social center is a well-designed and pleasant restaurant and bar, which is more casual and relaxed than you might expect for such an upscale venue.

278 Crighton Dr. (P.O. Box 31495 SMB), Crystal Harbour, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **345/949-3100.** Fax 345/949-3161. www.grandcaymanian.ky. Winter US$249 studio, US$419 1-bedroom suite, US$529–US$659 villa; off season US$169 studio, US$249 suite, US$369–US$519 villa. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant, bar; babysitting; children's center; concierge; 2 outdoor pools; 2 tennis courts (lit); watersports equipment/rentals; Wi-Fi (free). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, kitchen.

Shangri-La B&B ★★ (Finds) This is the most elegant bed-and-breakfast on the island, the creation of George Davidson, an entertainer who plays the piano at various venues on the island, including the Westin Hotel. He and his wife, Eileen, welcome you to their charming lakeside home, an epitome of good taste and comfort. The decor is imbued with style, from the carved hardwood furnishings to the embroidered pillows. There is a screened patio that fronts the birdlife on the lagoon. Special features include a hot tub and a waterfall pool. Bedrooms are equally elegant, often with plantation-style four-posters or else canopied beds. Patrons are also granted kitchen privileges with room to store their stuff in the communal refrigerator.

Sticky Toffee Lane, West Bay, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **345/526-1170.** Fax 345/946-6491. www.shangrilabandb.com. 6 units. Winter US$119–US$189 double, US$219 1-bedroom apt, US$349 2-bedroom apt; off season US$119–US$169 double, US$199 1-bedroom apt, US$299 2-bedroom apt. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Outdoor pool. *In room:* TV/DVD, fridge, Wi-Fi (free).

Sunset House Set on a coastal road about 1.2km (3/4 mile) south of George Town, this middle-bracket hotel has rooms divided among a quartet of two-story pink-sided outbuildings. These well-recommended, no-nonsense lodgings are relatively comfortable. The location is favored by divers and snorkelers, who appreciate the jagged, mostly rocky shoreline for its excellent snorkeling opportunities, the extensive on-site diving programs, as well as the dive shop. For guests interested in sand, sun, and swimming, don't expect to take a dip off the shore here: You must lower yourself via ladders directly into the sea, thanks to the rocky shoreline.

Guests are given a number of options for accommodations, ranging from the cheapest—a unit opening onto the courtyard—to the most expensive—a roomy suite that contains extras such as private balconies, two double beds, a full kitchen, and a living room. The latter is ideal for families or groups of four or more who like to do

their own cooking. The midrange standard bedrooms open onto views of the sea and contain more space than the courtyard units.

390 S. Church St. (P.O. Box 479), George Town, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **800/854-4767** or 345/949-7111. Fax 345/949-7101. www.sunsethouse.com. 59 units. Winter US$186–US$230 double, US$269 suite, US$301 apt; off season US$196–US$242 double, US$270 suite, US$293 apt. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Seaharvest Restaurant (p. 102), bar; Jacuzzi; 2 outdoor pools; Wi-Fi (free in pool and at bar). *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge (in suites), kitchen (in apts).

Sunshine Suites Resort Built on a flat-as-a-pancake stretch of scrubland that requires a 5-minute trek across the busy traffic of West Bay Street before reaching the sands of Seven Mile Beach, this is a well-designed resort compound. Along with the also-recommended Comfort Suites, it is acknowledged as one of the least expensive lodgings in the Seven Mile Beach area. The resort resembles a decent but somewhat anonymous and uncluttered apartment complex on the outskirts of, say, Washington, D.C., that just so happens to be beside the beach. Both inside and out, the design reflects British colonial architecture. Each of the units has its own kitchen, so many guests prepare their meals on-site, avoiding the high cost of nearby restaurants and contributing to a hands-off laissez-faire dynamic that suits many of the guests here just fine. Each of the units is equipped with a midsize private bathroom with tub and shower.

1465 Esterley Tibbetts Hwy. (P.O. Box 30095), Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **877/786-1110** or 345/949-3000. Fax 345/949-1200. www.sunshinesuites.com. 132 units. Winter US$224–US$293 double, US$254–US$303 1-bedroom suite; off season US$176–US$207 double, US$206–US$217 1-bedroom suite. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant, bar; access to nearby health club; outdoor pool; watersports equipment/rentals. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, kitchen, Wi-Fi (US$10 per day).

Turtle Nest Inn (Value) This cluster of fully furnished apartments opening onto a beach is an attractive and affordable alternative to the pricey condos and chain hotels such as the Marriott. The beachout front is a bit narrow, but always has good snorkeling (equipment available at the inn) and guests usually find it uncrowded. Otherwise, guests relax on the terrace. The architecture is vaguely Spanish, with arches and a red-tiled roof, along with whitewashed walls and cooling terra-cotta tiles in the private, well-furnished units. The inn is located in the somewhat remote village of Bodden Town, the first capital of the island, which is a 10-minute drive from George Town and the airport.

166 Bodden Town Rd. (P.O. Box 187), Bodden Town, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **345/947-8665.** Fax 345/947-6379. www.turtlenestinn.com. 8 apts. Winter US$149–US$329; off season US$99–US$219. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Bikes/mopeds; outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, kitchen (in some), Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

Eldemire's Tropical Island Dive Inn Set within a quiet and completely unpretentious residential neighborhood on the landward side of South Church Road, 1.5km (1 mile) south of downtown George Town, this is one of only two B&Bs on Grand Cayman. Basic and completely free of glitter, it's run with a relaxed sense of humor by Carol "Tootie" Eldemire-Huddleston, the congenial but outspoken and no-nonsense, Jamaica-born entrepreneur ("a helluva matriarch") who lives across the street. Accommodations lie in either the main house or a handful of outbuildings. Each of the rooms is a simple, sparsely furnished affair, with well-worn furniture and few frills. Residents of the standard rooms have access to the house's communal kitchen, and each of the suites contains a simple kitchenette. Dive courses are available. Smith Cove Beach lies within a 5-minute walk.

18 Pebbles Way, George Town, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **345/916-8369** or 345/916-2022. Fax 345/949-4595. www.eldemire.com. 13 units. Winter US$119 double, US$129–US$144 studio suite, US$159 1-bedroom suite, US$240 2-bedroom suite; off season US$85 double, US$95–US$105 studio suite, US$115 1-bedroom apt, US$175 2-bedroom apt. Dive packages available. **Amenities:** Bikes; outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchenette (in suites),) Wi-Fi (free).

Rocky Shore Villas (Finds) This little guesthouse, a real find, lies to the north of Seven Mile Beach near the Turtle Farm in the West Bay area, far removed from the action along overcrowded Seven Mile Beach. It is only steps away from a tranquil beach and has easy access to good snorkeling and scuba diving. Massage therapy and traditional arts-and-crafts classes are offered on-site. This hotel can connect you to local life more than any other lodging on the island, as the on-site owners are involved in a number of the island's social and cultural activities, and can recommend excursions and activities you might not otherwise hear about.

30 Grass Piece Lane, West Bay, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **866/845-6943** or 345/926-0119. Fax 345/946-0118. www.getaway.ky. 7 units, 2 with private bathroom. Winter US$120–US$385 double; off season US$99–US$265 double. MC, V. **Amenities:** Babysitting. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, fridge, no phone, Wi-Fi (free).

2 CONDOS, VILLAS & COTTAGES

VERY EXPENSIVE

The Avalon Condominiums ★★ One of Grand Cayman's best condo complexes is the Avalon, which occupies prime real estate on a stretch of Seven Mile Beach. Painted a distinctive shade of blue-violet

(the staff refers to it as "orchid"), it consists of 27 oceanfront three-bedroom/three-bathroom units, 19 of which are available for rent. Only a short distance from restaurants, and about a 10-minute drive from George Town, the Avalon is well-maintained, pleasant, and stylish. The three-story design ensures a lower density of people on the beachfront than you're likely to find in front of newer properties with six or seven stories. Children under 12 are allowed on-site, but overall, they're rather carefully "policed" for misbehavior and loud noises, a policy that contributes to a sense of calm and sedate well-being that residents and investors work hard to maintain. The well-appointed, spacious units have an English colonial motif; durable, flowered or pastel-colored upholsteries; plus king-size or twin beds. Each condo has a fully equipped, open-sided kitchen with amenities (including granite or Corian countertops) upgraded in 2006 and a screened lanai overlooking a stretch of beach.

West Bay Rd. (P.O. Box 31236), Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **305/395-4503** or 345/945-4171. Fax 345/945-4189. www.avaloncayman.com. 27 units. Winter US$975 apt for 4, US$1,175 apt for 6; off season US$595 apt for 4, US$695 apt for 6. Surcharges of up to 10% apply during Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Exercise room; Jacuzzi; sauna; tennis court (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, kitchen, Wi-Fi (free).

The Beachcomber ★ In the center of Seven Mile Beach, this is one of the older condo complexes, but it's still well maintained and inviting. The fabled sands of Seven Mile Beach lie right outside your rental. Upon arrival, you're made to feel welcome: You're given a piece of rum cake and discount coupons for shops and attractions. The condos are spacious, but rather simply furnished. Each is a two-bedroom apartment that sleeps four people comfortably and six people in a somewhat cramped fashion. Tile floors and rattan furnishings make up the decor, and each unit opens onto a view of the sea from a screened-in private patio. For those who want to make use of their kitchenettes, at least for preparing simple meals, a grocery store is across the street. Even if you don't have a car, you'll find a deli, three dive shops, liquor stores, and scooter rentals nearby. The restaurants and bars of the Westin and Hyatt are also within walking distance. You'll find good snorkeling on the reef right offshore.

P.O. Box 1799, Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **345/945-4470.** Fax 345/945-5019. www.beachcomber1.com/location.html. 24 condos. Winter US$–50–US$1,300 double; off season US$450–US$850 double. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Babysitting; access to nearby health club; outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, CD player, hair dryer, kitchen, Wi-Fi (free).

The Colonial Club ★★ Built in 1985, this pastel-pink complex is set on a highly desirable stretch of the famous Seven Mile Beach. It's a three-story and rather standard condominium development

about 6km (3¾ miles) north of George Town and some 10 minutes from the airport. First-class maintenance, service, and accommodations are provided in the apartments, all of which have a kitchen, maid service, and laundry facilities. Usually only 8 of the 24 apartments are available for rent (the rest are privately owned and occupied, but are sometimes rented out). You can choose units with two bedrooms and three bathrooms or units with three bedrooms and three bathrooms.

West Bay Rd. (P.O. Box 320WB), Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **345/945-4660.** Fax 345/945-4839. www.thecolonialclub.com. 24 units. Winter US$625–US$725 apt for 4, US$695–US$795 apt for 6; off season US$350–US$425 apt for 4, US$420–US$495 apt for 6. Minimum stay 5 nights Dec 16–Apr 15. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Outdoor pool; tennis court (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV, Internet (free), kitchen.

Lighthouse Point ★ If you want to travel "green" in Grand Cayman, this 2009 condo resort is the most eco-friendly on the island. Located on the northwest point of the island, the resort has rooms with unobstructed views of the Caribbean from private balconies, and it's surrounded by flora and fauna indigenous to the islands. The exterior blends into the landscape, with a number of nautical features such as anchors, cannons, and yes, even a lighthouse. Green amenities include solar power, wind power, and on-demand hot water heating, as well as a water reclamation system. The condos are made of solid wood interiors (from sustainable forests), and there is also a dive shop run by Divetech, one of Cayman's premier operators. Divers can explore a 19th-century shipwreck and, more recently, the USS *Kittiwake,* a World War II American rescue vessel sunk to create a 250-foot-long reef teeming with fish. The one- and two-bedroom suites and villas are attractively and comfortably furnished in a Caribbean motif.

Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **345/946-5658.** www.lighthouse-point-cayman.com. US$4,800 weekly; off season US$3,500–US$4,000 weekly. MC, V. *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchen, Wi-Fi (free).

EXPENSIVE

Aqua Bay Club ★ These privately owned oceanfront condos occupy well-kept grounds with coconut palms, on the western end of Seven Mile Beach, about a 20-minute run from the airport. Short-term rentals are arranged here while the owners are away. Each of the units has the same layout, and most come with two bedrooms and two full bathrooms. In most cases, the master bedroom opens onto a terrace with a view of the water. Each unit comes with a well-equipped kitchen, including a dishwasher. Special features include machines for laundry as well as grills for barbecuing near the beach. As an added bonus, a cellphone is provided for each rental.

The location is a bit remote, so you'll probably have to rely on taxi service unless you rent a car.

Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **800/825-8703.** Fax 345/945-5681. www.aquabayclub.com. 21 units Winter US$325–US$425 1-bedroom suite, US$395–US$625 2-bedroom suite; off season US$275 1-bedroom suite, US$325–US$375 2-bedroom suite. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Jacuzzi; outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchen.

The Discovery Point Club ★ (Kids) Located at the far end of the northern stretch of Seven Mile Beach, in West Bay (10km/6 miles from George Town), this tranquil and relatively isolated group of condos is entirely composed of privately owned oceanside suites. The venue here is local, West Indian, and rural—if you're looking for big-city ways, forget it and move back south along West Bay Road. When you tire of snorkeling just offshore, retreat to the club's pool or Jacuzzi. Accommodations are comfortable, individually furnished and styled, well maintained, and, in some cases, better than those offered by nearby competitors. Condos have tasteful furnishings and a screened patio, and each has daily maid service. Each renovated unit comes with a fully equipped kitchen. Children under 12 stay free, and cribs and rollaways are available. Between March and December, management here will agree to subdivide any two-bedroom suite into studios and one-bedroom suites by locking doors within each individual unit. But between December and March, the staff is a lot less flexible: At that time, the only available option is renting an entire two-bedroom suite.

West Bay Rd. (P.O. Box 439), West Bay, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **345/945-4724.** Fax 345/945-5051. http://discoverypointclub.com. 45 units. Year-round US$235 studio; US$495 1-bedroom apt; US$540 2-bedroom apt. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Jacuzzi; outdoor pool; 2 tennis courts (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Internet (free), kitchen.

Lacovia Condominiums ★ (Finds) This lovely condo resort opens onto 122m (400 ft.) of white sand on Seven Mile Beach, and is surrounded by tropical gardens and towering shade trees, making for an idyllic location. Lacovia features handsomely furnished and comfortable two- and three-bedroom condos, complete with kitchens. Although it's not quite home away from home, it's almost there. The accommodations are well maintained by an efficient housekeeping staff, and the decor is a modern Caribbean motif. If you're cooking in, you can walk to a grocery store; otherwise opt for one of the good restaurants nearby. In spite of a lot of traffic on the beach road, life in the courtyard is secluded and tranquil. Of course, you must pay the piper for all this luxury.

Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **345/949-7599.** Fax 345/949-0172. www.lacovia.com. 35 units. Winter US$415–US$545 1-bedroom condo, US$570–US$685 2-bedroom condo, US$720–US$875 3-bedroom condo; off season

US$290–US$345 1-bedroom condo, US$335–US$435 2-bedroom condo, US$435–US$530 3-bedroom condo. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Exercise room; Jacuzzi; outdoor pool; tennis court (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV, Internet (free), kitchen.

London House ★ At the tranquil northern end of Seven Mile Beach, London House is a good choice if you'd like your own upscale apartment. Thanks to Hurricane Ivan, the hotel has undergone a massive renovation and essentially is rebuilt in its original style. Each unit has a fully equipped kitchen, spacious living and dining areas, and a private patio or balcony overlooking the water. Floral prints, rattan, tile floors, and Caribbean pastels set a tropical tone in most units.

The complex has a seaside swimming pool (but try to get a room away from the pool area if you're bothered by noise, as parties are sometimes staged on the patio), plus a volleyball court. You'll find a stone barbecue for private poolside cookouts and many restaurants nearby.

Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **345/945-4060.** Fax 345/945-4087. www.londonhouse.ky. 21 units. Winter US$390–US$450 1-bedroom apt, US$375–US$575 2-bedroom apt, US$800 3-bedroom apt; off season US$320–US$350 1-bedroom apt, US$315–US$450 2-bedroom apt, US$495–US$550 3-bedroom apt. Extra person US$30 per day. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Babysitting; outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, kitchen, Wi-Fi (free).

Morritt's Tortuga Club and Grand Resort ★ On 3 beachfront hectares (7½ acres) on the east end of the island, this resort offers some of the island's best windsurfing and diving within waters that drop off quickly into Grand Cayman's "West Wall." **Tortuga Divers** (p. 111) runs a branch on the premises and focuses on the diving and windsurfing trade that has developed offshore from this isolated, but surprisingly busy hotel.

About a 40km (25-mile) drive from the airport, the resort and club are composed of clusters of three-story beachfront condos opening onto the water. Each was built in the Antillean plantation style from the wreckage of a former hotel. There's a bit more space within the Grand Resort units, with kitchens that are a somewhat of an upgrade from those in the Tortuga Club. Grand Resort rooms rent at a premium between 10% and 15% more than the rates noted below. Many are rented as timeshare units, often to visiting British and Canadian residents who appreciate the calm of this resort's isolated position on Grand Cayman's distant East End. Each of the comfortably furnished apartments has a fully equipped kitchen, although many guests opt for meals in the complex's simple restaurant.

P.O. Box 496GT, East End, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **800/447-0309** in the U.S., or 345/947-7449. Fax 345/947-7669. www.morritts.com. 160 units. Winter US$230–US$260 studio, US$325–US$375 1-bedroom apt, US$445–US$480 2-bedroom apt; off season US$185–US$215 studio, US$240–US$290 1-bedroom apt, US$335–US$385 2-bedroom apt. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant, 4 bars; babysitting; exercise room; 3 outdoor pools. *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchenette, Wi-Fi (US$7 per day).

The Reef Resort ★ (Finds) A bit of a discovery, this well-maintained and exceedingly comfortable timeshare/condo complex is located in the less trampled East End, a 32km (20-mile) drive from the airport. Guests who stay here will need a car, as the property lies about a 45-minute ride from George Town. Spacious beachfront units range from luxury studios to suites. The studio units, favorites among honeymooners, are the smallest and feature their own balcony, a full bathroom, an oversize Jacuzzi, and a kitchenette. The one-bedroom suites are a good option for a family, and are mainly the same as the studios except that they are larger and feature two pullout Murphy beds in the living room. These units are suitable for four guests. The largest, best, and most expensive of the accommodations are the two-bedroom villas, which are a combination of the one-bedroom suite and the studio. The spaciousness of these particular lodgings makes them a favorite with larger families. The many activities here range from stargazing to diving instruction.

Queen's Hwy. (P.O. Box 3865), Colliers Bay, East End, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **888/232-0541** in the U.S., or 345/947-3100. Fax 345/947-9920. www.thereef.com. 30 units. Winter US$300–US$350 studio, US$395 1-bedroom suite, US$550 2-bedroom villa; off season US$230–US$265 studio, US$305 1-bedroom suite, US$410 2-bedroom villa. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant, bar; babysitting; health club & spa; 3 outdoor pools; room service; tennis court (lit); watersports equipment/rentals. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, CD player (in some), kitchenette, Wi-Fi (US$8 per day).

The Retreat at Rum Point ★ This secluded, remote group of privately owned condominiums, located on Rum Point peninsula, opens onto 390m (1,280 ft.) of white-sand beach. The beach, shaded by casuarina trees, is a bit narrow and can hardly compare to the wide sands of Seven Mile Beach, but the place draws tranquillity seekers for its relative isolation. The retreat is a 35-minute drive from George Town or the airport. The condos are owner-occupied for part of the year and are rented otherwise. Each condo has been individually decorated by its particular owner, and most feature typical Caribbean decor, with wicker and rattan. All units contain private balconies. Each condo has a fully equipped kitchen, as well as a washer and dryer. Small groups ranging from two to six people can be accommodated here in one- to three-bedroom beachfront condos. All units receive maid service. The Hyatt Rum Point Club—with its beach bar and barbecue—is right next door. The Red Ginger and the Lighthouse at Breakers restaurants are within walking distance. Right next door to the Retreat is an office of **Red Sail Sports** (p. 108), an excellent watersports outfitter.

P.O. Box 46, North Side, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **866/947-9135.** Fax 345/947-9116. www.theretreat.com.ky. 23 units. Winter US$330–US$450 double, US$550 triple; off season US$230–US$325 double, US$400 triple. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:**

Exercise room; outdoor pool; tennis court (lit); nearby watersports equipment/rentals; Wi-Fi (free by pool). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, kitchen.

Silver Sands Condominiums ★ (Kids) A good choice for families, this modern complex is arranged around a rectangular pool on the relatively low-density stretch of sandy beachfront, 11km (7 miles) north of George Town. The eight three-story apartment blocks, each painted pale blue, were solidly built to high standards in the late 1970s, and in some ways are more substantial than recently constructed projects nearby. Each is configured as either a two-bedroom/two-bathroom or three-bedroom/three-bathroom unit. Each apartment comes with a balcony and a fully equipped kitchen. In all, this is a smoothly run operation, which, in spite of its high costs, satisfies most guests.

West Bay Rd. (P.O. Box 752WB), Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **345/949-3343.** Fax 345/949-1223. www.silversandscondos.com. 42 units. Winter US$390–US$410 1-bedroom apt, US$500–US$520 2-bedroom apt, US$610–US$690 3-bedroom apt; off season US$280–US$300 1-bedroom apt, US$320–US$340 2-bedroom apt, US$410–US$480 3-bedroom apt. Additional person US$25 extra. Children 12 and under stay free in parent's room. Minimum 7 nights in winter, 3 nights off season. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Outdoor pool; 2 tennis courts (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchen, Wi-Fi (free).

Villas of the Galleon ★ (Kids) This condo complex is on the widest strip of sand along Seven Mile Beach, across the road from the **Links at SafeHaven** golf course. Inside the stucco cottages, you'll find impressive, well-maintained rooms with rattan furnishings and pastels, along with creamy tiles, all evoking the easy, breezy Caribbean lifestyle. Each of the rentals contains one, two, or three bedrooms along with a fully equipped kitchen and a private balcony or patio overlooking Seven Mile Beach and the ocean. The closets are especially large. The villas lie just 2 blocks from grocery and liquor stores and several top restaurants. Families like to check in here because each unit comes with baby cribs and rollaways. You'll find beach towels, patio furniture, beach loungers, and outdoor barbecue grills. There is even daily maid service.

P.O. Box 1797, Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **345/945-4433.** Fax 345/945-4705. www.villasofthegalleon.com. 59 villas. Winter US$420–US$510 1-bedroom, US$525–US$650 2-bedroom, US$650–US$850 3-bedroom; off season US$295–US$360 1-bedroom, US$300–US$425 2-bedroom, US$400–US$600 3-bedroom. Extra person US$50. AE, DISC, MC, V. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, CD player, Internet (free).

MODERATE

The Anchorage On a tranquil part of Seven Mile Beach, this villa complex provides a series of well-furnished, privately owned, and individually decorated units. Each has two bedrooms and two bathrooms

and can accommodate up to four (great for two couples traveling together or a family with kids). Units opening onto the garden are the least expensive; you pay more for oceanfront accommodations. Each villa has a screened porch or balcony. Good snorkeling can be found right offshore.

P.O. Box 30986, Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **813/333-6532** in the U.S., or 345/945-4088. Fax 345/945-5001. www.theanchoragecayman.com. 15 units. Winter US$295–US$505 2-bedroom apt; off season US$190–US$319 2-bedroom apt. MC, V. **Amenities:** Outdoor pool; tennis court (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchen, Wi-Fi (free).

Christopher Columbus ★ (Kids) This is an intimate condo complex and hideaway tucked away at the northern end of Seven Mile Beach, with some of the best snorkeling right off its beach. The choice is idyllic for families because the lodgings consist of either two- or three-bedroom units. Thatched cabanas line the beach in front of the hotel. Spacious, well-equipped kitchens and large living rooms are found in each of the condos, which are decorated with pastel colors, handsomely furnished, and well maintained. There's a private swimming pool if you don't want the beach. You can also do the family laundry on-site. However, you'll need transportation to reach most restaurants and attractions.

2013 West Bay Rd., Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **866/311-5231** or 345/945-4354. Fax 345/945-5062. www.christophercolumbuscondos.com. 30 units. Winter US$340 2-bedroom unit, US$490 3-bedroom unit, US$540 penthouse; off season US$210 2-bedroom unit, US$275 3-bedroom unit, US$325 penthouse. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Outdoor pool; 2 tennis courts (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchen, Wi-Fi (free).

Island Pine Villas Right on Seven Mile Beach, this unpretentious villa complex is comfortable and casual, though it's far less elegant than the Colonial Club. A family-friendly complex of one- and two-bedroom condos, it is close to George Town. Inside and outside, it looks like a Days Inn motel along the Florida Turnpike. The units are well furnished with fully equipped kitchens and daily maid service. There's a choice of queen- or king-size beds, and the best accommodations overlook the beach.

P.O. Box 30197-SMB, Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **345/949-6586.** Fax 345/949-0428. www.caribbeancoast.com/nHotels/IslandPineVillas. 40 units. Winter US$200 double; off season US$150 double. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Watersports equipment/rentals. *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchen.

4

Where to Dine on Grand Cayman

On his trip to the West Indies in 1859, Anthony Trollope, the British novelist, was not impressed with the food his plantation-owning hosts served him. Ignoring the rich bounty of their islands, including local fruits and vegetables, they fed him canned potatoes, "tinned meats," and cheeses imported from England. At the time, British expats felt that if a food item didn't come from their homeland, it wasn't worth putting on the table.

Regrettably, Trollope did not visit the Cayman Islands as part of his sojourn. Had he paid a call, he would have found that the enterprising Caymanians were eating what they raised. Or, more accurately, what they caught. There was little reliance on imported goods. Today, Caymanian cuisine continues to take advantage of the islands' natural provisions and local fish is easily found on menus throughout the Caymans.

Many of today's chefs in the Cayman Islands rely on international recipes for their restaurant offerings, and some Caymanians claim that you have to be invited to a local home for real island cuisine. That is not true. Many restaurants still feature West Indian cooks who prepare food as their grandmothers did, and we've recommended several of them. Unless a restaurant is devoted to a foreign cuisine, many Cayman dishes still appear regularly on menus.

Although Grand Cayman hotels quote their rates in U.S. dollars, nearly all restaurants present menus in both Cayman and U.S. dollars. This is based on the assumption that islanders patronize their local restaurants, but have little need for hotel rooms. Most restaurants add a 10% to 15% charge in lieu of tipping, so check your bill carefully.

Following are some menu items and descriptions of main dishes at Cayman restaurants:

SEA TURTLE Turtle meat that appears on menus in the Cayman Islands is from a local turtle farm that raises turtles specifically for commercial purposes.

QUEEN CONCH The national food of the Cayman Islands is conch. The firm white meat of this mollusk—called the "snail of the sea"—tastes somewhat bland until local chefs work their magic.

Tips The High Price of Imported Ingredients

Because many ingredients must be shipped in to the Cayman Islands, restaurants here are among the most expensive in the Caribbean. Even so-called moderate restaurants can become expensive if you order steak or lobster. For the best value, opt for West Indian fare at local restaurants.

Conch has a chewy consistency, which means that it has to be tenderized. It's often served at happy hour in taverns and bars, as a main dish, in salads, and as hors d'oeuvres.

Every cook has a different recipe for making conch chowder, but a popular version includes tomatoes, potatoes, sweet peppers, onions, carrots, salt or pork bacon, bay leaves, thyme, and (of course) salt and pepper. Conch fritters are served with hot sauce and are made with finely minced peppers, onions, and tomato paste, among other ingredients. They are deep-fried in oil.

Cracked conch (or "fried conch," as the old-timers used to call it) is prepared like a breaded veal cutlet. Tenderized and dipped in batter, it is then sautéed. Conch is also served steamed, in Creole sauce, curried, "scorched," creamed on toast, and stewed. You'll even see "conch burgers" listed on menus.

Marinated conch is frequently enjoyed right on the water, courtesy of the numerous Caymanian sea captains who operate North Sound excursions that include lunch. They will scoop a conch right out of the sea, remove it from its shell (an art unto itself), slice it up, and serve it with lime juice and onions—as fresh as it can possibly be.

THE MAIN EVENT Red snapper, mahimahi (which is also called dorado or dolphin), swordfish, yellowfin tuna, and grouper are the most commonly available fish.

The most elegant item you'll see on nearly any menu is the local spiny lobster. This tropical cousin of the Maine lobster is also called crayfish or rock lobster. Only the tail is eaten. You get fresh lobster when it is in season, from the beginning of April until the end of August. Otherwise it's frozen.

Chicken and pork, the meats that are most often prepared island-style, are frequently roasted, grilled, curried, or "jerked"—that is, rubbed with spices and slow-smoked for hours over a low fire, preferably made with pimento wood. Each cook has his or her own spice blend, but jerk spices usually include allspice, hot Scotch bonnet pepper, thyme, nutmeg, salt, garlic, onion, and green onion. Other popular meat dishes that are easily found at restaurants serving island

cuisine include braised beef liv er, curried goat, o xtail, and salt beef and beans.

The most frequent companion for main dishes is "rice and peas," a dish that's also popular in Jamaica, which is actually composed of rice and red beans cooked in coconut milk. Along with rice and peas, ripe plantains (larger, less sweet relatives of the banana) are fried or baked with brown sugar and served alongside main dishes.

1 RESTAURANTS BY CUISINE

American

Chicken! Chicken! (Seven Mile Beach, $, p. 100)
Corita's Copper Kettle ★ (George Town, $, p. 100)
Grand Old House ★★ (South of George Town, $$$, p. 86)
Hard Rock Cafe Cayman Island (George Town, $, p. 101)
Rackham's Pub & Restaurant (George Town, $$, p. 98)

Cafe/Coffeehouse

Full of Beans (George Town, $$, p. 96)

Caribbean

AquaBeach Restaurant & Bar (Seven Mile Beach, $$, p. 93)
Bacchus Restaurant and Wine Bar ★ (George Town, $$, p. 94)
The Brasserie ★★ (George Town, $$$, p. 83)
Breezes by the Bay (George Town, $$, p. 94)
Corita's Copper Kettle ★ (George Town, $, p. 100)
Grand Old House ★★ (South of George Town, $$$, p. 86)
Harry's Caribbean Bar & Grill (George Town, $, p. 101)
The Lighthouse Restaurant at Breakers ★ (Breakers, $$$, p. 88)
Over the Edge (Old Man Bay, $$, p. 97)
Portofino Wreckview Restaurant ★ (Colliers, $$$, p. 90)
Rackham's Pub & Restaurant (George Town, $$, p. 98)
The Wharf ★ (Seven Mile Beach, $$$, p. 92)

Continental

The Brasserie ★★ (George Town, $$$, p. 83)
Deckers Grille & Lounge (Seven Mile Beach, $$, p. 95)
The Wharf ★ (Seven Mile Beach, $$$, p. 92)

English Pub Fare

Triple Crown (Seven Mile Beach, $, p. 103)

Indian

Gateway of India (Seven Mile Beach, $$, p. 97)

International

Breezes by the Bay (George Town, $$, p. 94)
The Brick House (Red Bay, $$, p. 94)
Calypso Grill ★★ (Morgan's Harbour, $$$, p. 83)
Cimboco Caribbean Cafe (Seven Mile Beach, $, p. 100)
Hemingway's ★★ (Seven Mile Beach, $$$, p. 87)
Kaibo Beach Bar & Grill ★ (North Side, $$$, p. 88)
Lobster Pot ★ (George Town, $$$, p. 88)
Mezza (Seven Mile Beach, $, p. 102)
Portofino Wreckview Restaurant ★ (Colliers, $$$, p. 90)
Seaharvest Restaurant ★ (South of George Town, $, p. 102)

Italian

Casanova's ★ (George Town, $$$, p. 84)
Edoardo's (Seven Mile Beach, $$, p. 96)
The Lighthouse Restaurant at Breakers ★ (Breakers, $$$, p. 88)
Neptune's ★ (Seven Mile Beach, $$$, p. 90)
Portofino Wreckview Restaurant ★ (Colliers, $$$, p. 90)
Ristorante Pappagallo ★ (Conch Point, $$$, p. 92)
Ristorante Ragazzi (Seven Mile Beach, $$, p. 98)

Jamaican

Seymour's Jerk Centre (George Town, $, p. 103)

Kabobs

Al la Kebab (Seven Mile Beach, $, p. 99)

Light Fare

Full of Beans (George Town, $$, p. 96)
Icoa Cafe (Seven Mile Beach, $, p. 102)

Mediterranean

Cafe Mediterraneo (Seven Mile Beach, $$, p. 95)

Pacific Rim

Grand Old House ★★ (South of George Town, $$$, p. 86)

Seafood

Calypso Grill ★★ (Morgan's Harbour, $$$, p. 83)
Casanova's ★ (George Town, $$$, p. 84)
The Cracked Conch/Macabuca Oceanside Tiki Bar & Grill ★★ (West Bay, $$$, p. 84)
Hemingway's ★★ (Seven Mile Beach, $$$, p. 87)

The Lighthouse Restaurant at Breakers ★ (Breakers, $$$, p. 88)
Lobster Pot ★ (George Town, $$$, p. 88)
The Reef Grill at Royal Palms ★★★ (Seven Mile Beach, $$$, p. 91)
Ristorante Pappagallo ★ (Conch Point, $$$, p. 92)

Thai

Thai Orchid (Seven Mile Beach, $$, p. 99)

West Indian

Vivine's Kitchen ★ (Gun Bay, $, p. 103)

2 EXPENSIVE

The Brasserie ★★ CARIBBEAN/CONTINENTAL Elegant and stylish, and favored by members of Grand Cayman's investment community, this restaurant seems very far removed from the tourist hubbub of Seven Mile Beach and other tourist-geared areas. Expect a Caribbean colonial decor with high ceilings, artfully carved teakwood and mahogany furniture, spinning ceiling fans, and a cool, breezy layout that might evoke an upscale private club in a long-gone British colonial empire. Lunches focus on upscale and upbeat salads such as a fresh yellowfin tuna tataki with pine nuts, feta cheese, and sweet basil vinaigrette, and pastas or the fresh catch of the day. Dinners are more elaborate, featuring such appetizers as a slab of Hudson Valley foie gras with chocolate foam or else warm white asparagus with prosciutto and a lemon velouté. Main courses are a Lucullan treat, especially the pan-seared scallops with a celeriac mousseline or else braised lamb shank with roasted garlic mashed potatoes and red wine cabbage.

171 Elgin Ave., Cricket Sq., George Town. ✆ **345/945-1815.** www.brasseriecayman.com. Reservations recommended, especially at lunch. Lunch salads and platters CI$9–CI$25; dinner main courses CI$22–CI$40. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2:30pm; tapas menu daily 4:30–7pm; dinner daily 6–10pm.

Calypso Grill ★★ Finds SEAFOOD/INTERNATIONAL At first glance, you might think this is little more than a waterfront shack. But when you enter, you'll find a charming, funky, and slightly psychedelic bar and restaurant that absolutely drips with Creole colors, a sense of whimsy, and even a bold and creative sense of elegance. If the wind isn't too brisk, you can sit on a wooden deck directly above the water, watching workaday fishing craft depositing their loads at West Bay's busiest fishing port. The place is very authentic with a clientele that derives from many walks of Caymanian life, from

the monied to the bohemian—all of it a far cry from the congestion and glitter of Seven Mile Beach. Perch at the rectangular bar here for a cocktail or any of a dozen kinds of wine by the glass, or, if a table isn't likely to become available, opt for a full meal. The best menu items include marinated conch; a creamy version of lobster bisque; Cuban-style shrimp with sherry-flavored cream sauce; fresh fish (ask the waiter what's available) that can be blackened, grilled, or sautéed; veal chops with chanterelles; and a garlic-laced version of shrimp linguine. Favorite desserts include mango crepes and sticky toffee pudding.

Morgan's Harbour, West Bay. ✆ **345/949-3948.** www.calypsogrillcayman.com. Reservations required for dinner. Main courses CI$16–CI$32. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm; Sun 12:30–2:30pm; Tues–Sun 6–10pm.

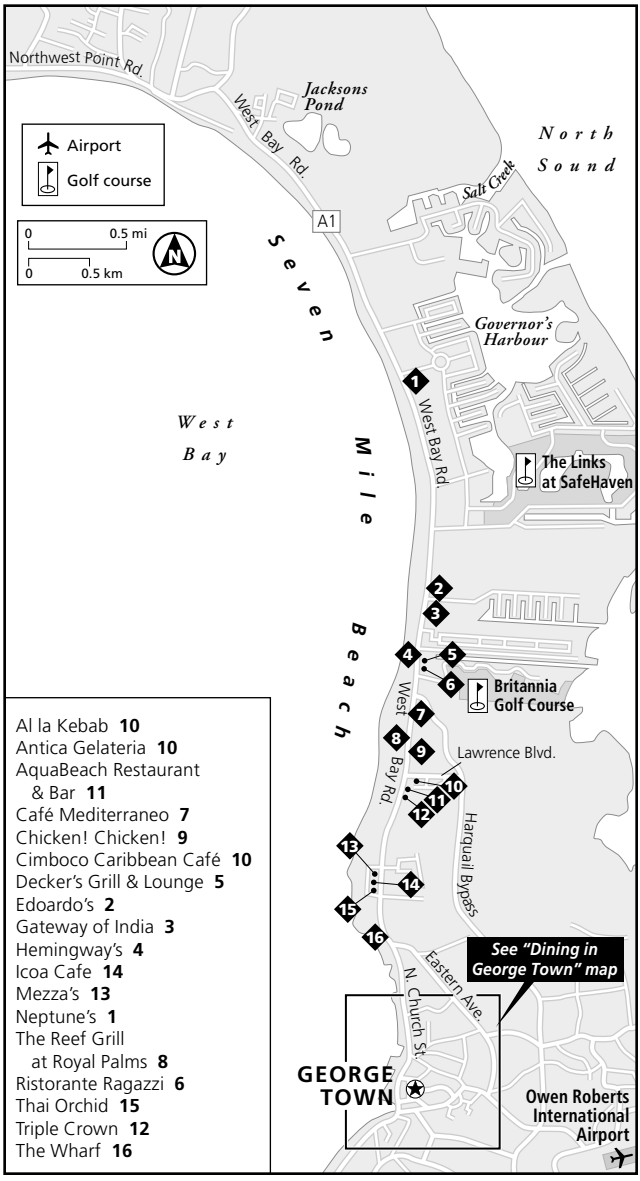
Casanova's ★ ITALIAN/SEAFOOD In the heart of George Town, this local favorite is owned and run by the Crescente family. Here, the cooks rely heavily on the catch of the day, and they have also mastered the heart of Italian cooking. The lunch menu is enticing with its salads and the homemade soup of the day. You can also order conch fritters with jerk mayonnaise and marinated chicken breast. Dinner grows more enticing with a choice of both hot and cold appetizers, ranging from tuna sashimi style to sautéed mussels. Pastas include a penne with fresh lobster or fresh center-cut yellowfin tuna in a light oregano sauce on a bed of orange seaweed salad.

65 N. Church St., George Town. ✆ **345/949-7633.** www.casanova.ky. Reservations recommended. Main courses CI$15–CI$35. MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm and daily 6–10pm.

The Cracked Conch/Macabuca Oceanside Tiki Bar & Grill ★★ SEAFOOD Nestled into the jagged rocks of West Bay, on the seacoast near the northern terminus of Seven Mile Beach, across the road from the Turtle Farm, this eatery serves some of the island's freshest seafood. It's also a dining and drinking destination in its own right, a magnet for young, attractive residents of Grand Cayman, who frequent the place when they're not otherwise hard at work on other parts of the island.

The best way to appreciate this setting involves drinks and perhaps a focus on the big-screen TVs at the Macabuca Tiki Bar, and then a migration to a table on the open-sided veranda at the Cracked Conch. The whole experience includes views of flickering torches and the sound of surf crashing against the jagged rocks nearby, hallucinatory rum punches and martinis, and very good food.

Management works hard to define the Macabuca Bar (whose name translates as "No Problem" in Taíno) as informal, relaxed, and irreverent, and the Cracked Conch as a venue for fine dining. Informal menu items available throughout the day and evening at Macabuca


Northwest Point Rd.
Jacksons Pond
West Bay Rd.
North Sound
Salt Creek
A1
Airport
Golf course
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Seven Mile Beach
West Bay
Governor's Harbour
West Bay Rd.
The Links at SafeHaven
Britannia Golf Course
West Bay Rd.
Lawrence Blvd.
Harquail Bypass
See "Dining in George Town" map
Eastern Ave.
N. Church St.
GEORGE TOWN
Owen Roberts International Airport
Al la Kebab 10
Antica Gelateria 10
AquaBeach Restaurant & Bar 11
Café Mediterraneo 7
Chicken! Chicken! 9
Cimboco Caribbean Café 10
Decker's Grill & Lounge 5
Edoardo's 2
Gateway of India 3
Hemingway's 4
Icoa Cafe 14
Mezza's 13
Neptune's 1
The Reef Grill at Royal Palms 8
Ristorante Ragazzi 6
Thai Orchid 15
Triple Crown 12
The Wharf 16

Tips Which Dollar? Yours or Mine?

Make sure you know the currency in which the menu prices are quoted. If the currency is not written on the menu, ask the waiter if the prices are in U.S. or Cayman Island dollars.

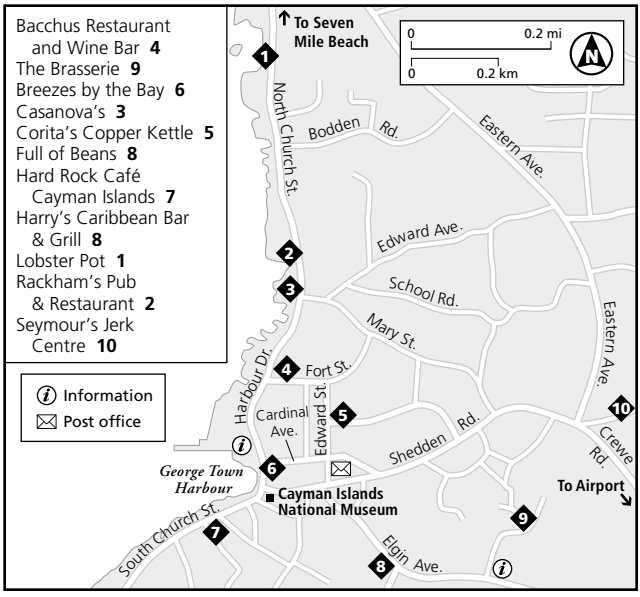
and at lunch at the Cracked Conch include salads; fried calamari; breaded and fried conch steaks; and beef, chicken, or conch burgers. More formal and elaborate dishes, available for dinner at the Cracked Conch, feature some of the most creative and upscale combinations of conch and turtle steak we've ever seen. Examples include a steamed-conch-and-snapper-coconut casserole; a skillfully prepared roulade of conch; and turtle steak braised with Parma ham, fresh tomatoes, and basil. Also available is a platter with fresh local tuna prepared three different ways: as marinated sashimi, as fried tuna rice rolls with pickled papaya, and as a tartare with fresh cilantro. Sunday brunches are festive, with buffet stations set up within the gleaming stainless-steel kitchen.

North West Point Rd., West Bay, near Cayman Turtle Farm. ✆ **345/945-5217.** www.crackedconch.com.ky. Reservations required. At Macabuca CI$9–CI$15; at Cracked Conch dinner CI$26–CI$42, all-you-can-eat Sun brunch buffet CI$26. AE, MC, V. Cracked Conch daily 11am–3pm and 5:30–10pm; Macabuca Tiki Bar daily 10am–midnight or later.

Grand Old House ★★ AMERICAN/CARIBBEAN/PACIFIC RIM The Grand Old House is the island's premier caterer and hosts everything from lavish weddings and political functions to informal family celebrations. This former plantation house lies amid venerable trees 2km (1 1/4 miles) south of George Town, past Jackson Point. Built on bedrock near the edge of the sea, it stands on 129 ironwood posts that support the main house and a bevy of gazebos.

For appetizers, we recommend the roasted lobster Napoleon or the marinated conch Cayman Island–style with tomato, cilantro, and Key lime flavorings. Also worthwhile is the tequila-infused snow crab and lobster laid on a mango gazpacho with spicy cucumber noodles. A signature main course is a platter of baked shrimp and scallops gratin in white wine, or the Cayman-style turtle steak in a tomato-and-white-wine sauce. Among fish dishes, we like the fire-roasted Chilean sea bass in balsamic syrup on a sweet-potato mash with a candied lemon-and-mango beurre blanc.

Petra Plantation, 648 S. Church St. ✆ **345/949-9333.** www.grandoldhouse.com. Reservations required. Main courses CI$23–CI$49. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2pm and daily 6–10pm.



Hemingway's ★★ SEAFOOD/INTERNATIONAL Some of the best seafood on the island is at the premier restaurant of the Grand Cayman Beach Suites, 3km (2 miles) north of George Town. It occupies a rambling, single-story annex of the hotel, in a spot shoehorned between the beach and two swimming pools. There's a rather plush bar inside, a favorite after-work hangout that's favored by managers of competing, nonaffiliated restaurants nearby; a big-windowed, air-conditioned dining room; and tables set outside, on a shaded colonnade near trails of bougainvillea, with spinning overhead fans. The menu is among the most imaginative on the island and has won acclaim from *Gourmet* magazine. Appetizers include a tasty coconut shrimp with a mango marmalade accent, Cuban-style barbecued turtle steak, well-spiced crab cakes, paella, and an absolutely fantastic deep-fried version of a whole red snapper that's de-boned and artfully presented like a piece of sculpture with pickled onions, bell peppers, and garlic-laced mashed potatoes. There's also the catch of the day, prepared any way you want it, including blackened, and citrus-and-cumin-marinated tenderloin of pork.

In the Grand Cayman Beach Suites, West Bay Rd. ✆ **345/949-1234.** Reservations required. Main courses lunch CI$12–CI$18, dinner CI$22–CI$42. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–2:30pm and 6–10pm.

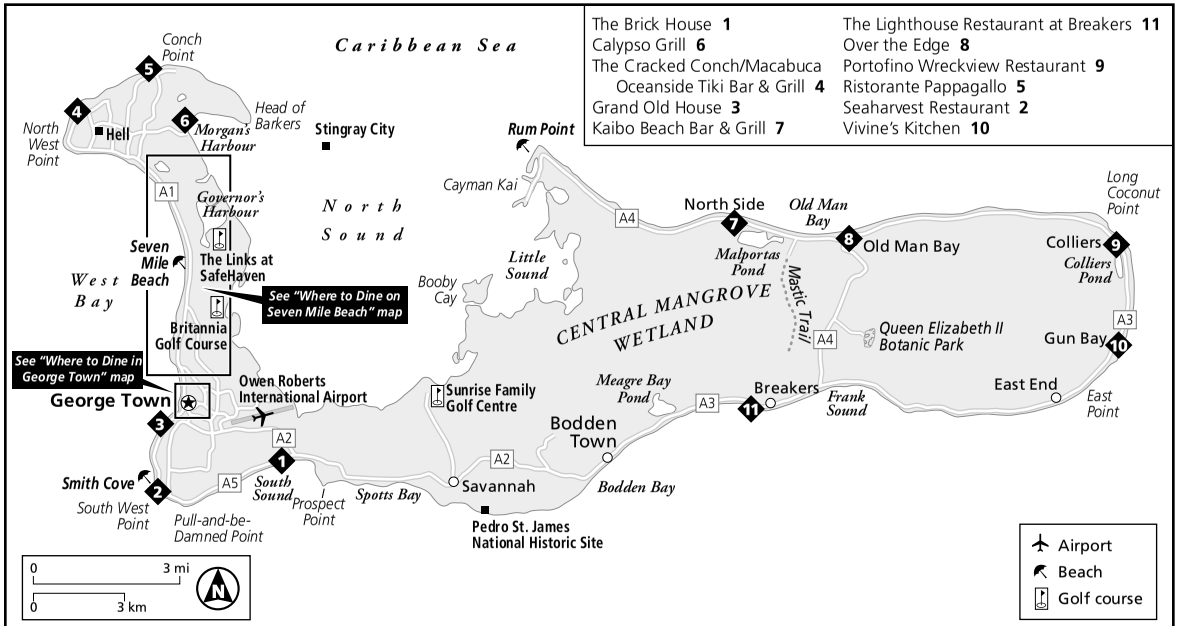
Kaibo Beach Bar & Grill ★ INTERNATIONAL Isolated on Grand Cayman's northern coast, in a location that's adjacent to a busy marina, this place serves good food in an irreverent and gregarious atmosphere. Some aspects of the place evoke a beach compound in Polynesia, thanks to flaming torches, multilevel terraces, and cabanas with palm thatched roofs. Menu items focus on juicy burgers, fresh salads, seafood prepared any way you want, steaks, and pastas, all accompanied by sunset-colored drinks that tend to get the party roaring.

585 Water Cay Rd. (in the Kaibo Yacht Club), Cayman Kai, North Side. ✆ **345/947-9975.** www.kaibo.ky. Lunchtime platters, salads, and sandwiches CI$8–CI$10; dinner main courses CI$24–CI$38. AE, MC, V. Grill daily 11am–11pm. Bar daily 11am–1am.

The Lighthouse Restaurant at Breakers ★ CARIBBEAN/ITALIAN/SEAFOOD On the south shore of the island, this cozy, elegant, and nautically decorated landmark lies about a 30-minute drive east of George Town. Its creative menu mainly features fresh local seafood. A well-trained chef, backed up by a skilled staff, serves well-prepared meals, attracting both locals and visitors. Put yourself in the hands of the mostly European staff and sit back to enjoy such tempting appetizers as penne pasta with shrimp, asparagus, tomatoes, and pesto; or tuna sushi rolled in sesame seeds. For your main course, opt for the mixed grill of Caribbean seafood, lobster with gnocchi and shrimp, filet mignon with brandy-flavored cream sauce, or a veal chop topped with Gorgonzola and pancetta ham. The restaurant has one of the best wine cellars on the island. Immediately adjacent to the restaurant is a towering life-size replica of a lighthouse, its trademark and signature, that's visible for many miles out to sea.

Shamrock Rd. (Rte. A3), Breakers. ✆ **345/947-2047.** www.lighthouse.ky. Reservations recommended. Main courses lunch CI$11–CI$16, dinner CI$18–CI$48. AE, DISC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–3:30pm and 5:30–10pm.

Lobster Pot ★ SEAFOOD/INTERNATIONAL Folksy and charming, but not quite as good and as polished as Hemingway's, Lobster Pot is still an island favorite. It overlooks the water from its second-floor perch at the northern perimeter of George Town, directly beside the road that funnels traffic into the capital from Seven Mile Beach. As its name suggests, it serves lobster prepared in many different ways: Cayman style, broiled in its shell, as lobster bisque, and as a mouth-watering salad. Braised jerk chicken, turtle steak, and stuffed Chilean salmon are also on the menu. Most dishes are right


The Brick House 1
Calypso Grill 6
The Cracked Conch/Macabuca Oceanside Tiki Bar & Grill 4
Grand Old House 3
Kaibo Beach Bar & Grill 7
The Lighthouse Restaurant at Breakers 11
Over the Edge 8
Portofino Wreckview Restaurant 9
Ristorante Pappagallo 5
Seaharvest Restaurant 2
Vivine's Kitchen 10
Caribbean Sea
Conch Point
North West Point
Hell
Head of Barkers
Morgan's Harbour
Stingray City
Rum Point
Cayman Kai
North Sound
Governor's Harbour
Seven Mile Beach
West Bay
The Links at SafeHaven
See "Where to Dine on Seven Mile Beach" map
Britannia Golf Course
See "Where to Dine in George Town" map
George Town
Owen Roberts International Airport
Sunrise Family Golf Centre
Little Sound
Booby Cay
North Side
Old Man Bay
Malportas Pond
Mastic Trail
CENTRAL MANGROVE WETLAND
Old Man Bay
Colliers
Colliers Pond
Long Coconut Point
Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park
Gun Bay
Meagre Bay Pond
Breakers
Frank Sound
East End
East Point
Bodden Town
Smith Cove
South Sound
Prospect Point
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Golf course

on the mark. A house specialty is the "Cayman Trio," with portions of broiled lobster tail, garlic-sautéed shrimp, and grilled fresh local fish piled onto the same platter. For lunch, you might opt for English-style fish and chips or perhaps lobster quesadillas or lobster-studded pasta.

245 N. Church St., George Town. ✆ **345/949-2736.** Reservations recommended in winter. Main courses lunch CI$12–CI$31, dinner CI$20–CI$45. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2:30pm; daily 5–10pm.

Neptune's ★ ITALIAN Set in a simple concrete building near the northern end of West Bay Road, this is one of a few genuinely appealing and relatively affordable Italian restaurants on Grand Cayman. There's no view of the sea, but you'll get the feeling that you're at the seashore, thanks to a decor featuring pristine ceramic tiles, a blue-and-white color scheme, and a mural of cavorting mermaids. Tables on the large outdoor terrace are centered on a human-size statue of Neptune, Greek god of the sea and the restaurant's namesake. Menu items include a wide array of the usual pastas, plus some nonstandard choices such as "Spaghetti alla Courtney," made with eggplant, fresh tomatoes, garlic, and mozzarella cheese; and "Spaghetti Bella Pesaro," made with grilled zucchini and fresh clams. The seafood options are especially tempting, including shrimp with garlic butter, balsamic vinegar, and fresh herbs; mixed seafood curry; and grilled red snapper served with lobster, shrimp, and tomato-flavored cream sauce.

Trafalgar Place (across from Seven Mile Beach), West Bay Rd. ✆ **345/946-8709.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat at dinner. Lunch CI$10–CI$15; dinner CI$17–CI$32. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm; daily 5:30–10:30pm.

Portofino Wreckview Restaurant ★ ITALIAN/INTERNATIONAL/CARIBBEAN In 1962, an American cargo ship, the *Liberty,* sank during a storm on a reef close to Grand Cayman's eastern shore. Today, split into three thoroughly rusted separate sections that rest in shallow water, it provides a focal point for the panoramas that open before you from the terrace of this restaurant. The most popular

Kids Family-Friendly Dining

Cafe Mediterraneo (p. 95) The wide array of pizzas and pastas and the convenient hours make this a favorite of many local and visiting families.

Chicken! Chicken! (p. 100) Families on a budget often head here to order an entire roasted chicken or two (each chicken serves about three diners), served with side dishes.

A Master Plan Community Blossoming into Life

Set on 500 acres between Seven Mile Beach and the North Sound, Camana Bay is a new town in the making. Shops, offices, cafes, restaurants, a six-screen cinema, along with new residences, are either nearing completion or are on the drawing boards. One of the focal points is the Cayman International School with more than 300 students. The eco-friendly community is geared toward the pedestrian, not the automobile. When it opens in 2010, the focal point will be "The Crescent," a waterfront plaza lined with restaurants and a venue for festivals, concerts, or whatever. The whole village is filled with Caribbean architecture and lush, indigenous landscaping.

independent restaurant on Grand Cayman's East End, it draws clients from the hotel and resort complexes nearby. You might begin a meal here with a satay of beef or chicken, served with a cucumber-and-peanut sauce, then follow with a savory version of *zuppa di pesce* (fish soup); breaded conch steak served in traditional East End style; turtle steak; any of several kinds of pasta; and the house specialty, baked seafood Portofino, which delectably combines lobster, tiger shrimp, scallops, and mousseline potatoes au gratin. Lunches are simpler than dinners, focusing on salads, sandwiches, pastas, and grilled fish.

In Colliers, East End. ✆ **345/947-2700.** Reservations recommended. Lunch platters CI$6.95–CI$24; dinner main courses CI$31–CI$35. AE, DISC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–10pm.

The Reef Grill at Royal Palms ★★★ SEAFOOD This is one of the island's finest, and one of our favorite, restaurants on Grand Cayman, a site that manages to be chic, savvy, elegant, hip, and fun all at the same time. It's positioned on a strategic plot of land in the heart of the Seven Mile Beach "golden strip." The savvy entrepreneurs who rent the space maintain a compound of one- and two-story buildings that include a beachfront bar and grill, a nightclub, and a classy citadel of gourmet cuisine. To fully appreciate the place, we recommend a brisk walk-through as a means of determining which corner of the place you'd most like to occupy. Let's just say that the inland, "landlocked" bar and dining area is elegant, red, and evocative of an upscale corner of Europe, and the seafront bar offers dance-floor views of Grand Cayman's most nubile and flirtatious chatterboxes.

Favorites here include Maytag blue cheese salad with chopped Granny Smith apples and spiced pecans; conch fritters with jerk-flavored mayonnaise; a melt-in-your-mouth honey- and soy-glazed sea

Tips A Caymanian Dinner, Please

If you're staying at one of the many condos and villas that pepper Grand Cayman, you can call a private caterer and order an island dinner to be delivered. One of the best is **Burton Ebanks** (✆ **345/926-8294**).

bass with Thai-style curried vinaigrette; and lobster risotto with coconut reduction. At lunch, you can order well-stuffed sandwiches, freshly made salads, and from-the-oven pizzas. If you opt to dine under the stars, and if it's a Friday or Saturday, you'll hear some of the most talented local musicians playing soca and calypso in the bar pavilion about 100 paces away.

In the Royal Palms Beach Club, Seven Mile Beach. ✆ **345/945-6358.** www.reefgrill.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses lunch CI$12–CI$18, dinner CI$23–CI$34. AE, MC, V. Daily 11am–3pm and 5:30–10pm. Closed Sun night May–Dec.

Ristorante Pappagallo ★ ITALIAN/SEAFOOD One of the island's most memorable restaurants lies on a 6-hectare (15-acre) bird sanctuary overlooking a natural lagoon, 15 minutes north of George Town. Its designers incorporated Caymanian and Aztec weaving techniques in its thatched roof. Glass doors, black marble, and polished brass mix a kind of Edwardian opulence with a Tahitian decor. Inside, you'll see some of the most beautiful (caged) parrots on the island, separated from the dining and drinking area (for sanitary reasons) by plate-glass windows. The lobster-and-scallop bisque in coconut cream and the carpaccio of raw beef with arugula are appealing appetizers. Pastas are full of flavor, especially the fettuccine with lemon-grilled chicken and sun-dried tomatoes and the penne with homemade sausage. Fish and shellfish are well prepared, or you can opt for either the peppered West Indian pork tenderloin in an apple-bourbon sauce, or a combination of lobster and shrimp, prepared in the style of the chef, with pepper, garlic, diced tomatoes, mushrooms, and a flaming brandy and tarragon-flavored cream sauce.

Close to the Villas Pappagallo, Conch Point Rd., Barkers, in West Bay (near the northern terminus of West Bay Rd., 13km/8 miles north of George Town). ✆ **345/949-1119.** www.pappagallo.ky. Reservations recommended. Main courses CI$10–CI$39. AE, MC, V. Daily 6–10:30pm.

The Wharf ★ CARIBBEAN/CONTINENTAL On the northern fringe of George Town, at the southernmost edge of Seven Mile Beach, this dining, drinking, and nightlife emporium is fun, tropical,

artfully illuminated, and occasionally hip. More than half of the place is built on wharves and piers that jut seaward, allowing fish to swim under your dining table as you eat, and even to make appearances in an open area that's the target of a plethora of spotlights that catch their every silvery movement. (The feeding of the tarpon, something approaching an underwater frenzy, occurs every night at 9pm.) The restaurant is decorated in tones of turquoise and blue, with dining in an air-conditioned interior, or outside on either an elevated veranda or a waterside terrace. The sound of the surf mingles with chatter from the Ports of Call Bar and music from the strolling Paraguayan harpist, Eugenio Leon.

Many diners begin with the blue-crab-and-shrimp salad with cucumber and mango, or the golden-fried Caribbean lobster cake with a roasted-corn relish. Main dishes are a delight, especially the basil-and-pistachio-crusted sea bass in a creamy champagne sauce or the grilled turtle-and-lobster pie with rice and vegetables. A local favorite is the pork tenderloin Tortuga, marinated with cumin, coriander, and molasses and served with a dark-rum sauce. Fresh fish can be prepared any way you want: blackened, almondine, grilled, or "island-style." The kitchen makes a laudable effort to break away from typical, dull menu items, and for the most part, they succeed.

43 West Bay Rd., Seven Mile Beach. ✆ **345/949-2231.** www.wharf.ky. Reservations recommended. Main courses CI$24–CI$40. AE, MC, V. Daily 6–10pm.

3 MODERATE

AquaBeach Restaurant & Bar CARIBBEAN This restaurant screams fun. Christmas lights hang around the edges of the thatched roof, and neon signs make the bar visible from any part of the restaurant. If you want a nice, quiet dinner, this isn't the place. Golf, football, rugby, hockey, basketball, cricket, and baseball can all be seen on one of the many big-screen televisions, and mixologists can create just about any cocktail your heart desires. Depending on what part of the restaurant you're sitting in, the walls will either be deep red or neon green with monkeys. The staff is young and hip, as is much of the clientele. The menu is nothing extraordinary, but the food is made well. Try the Island spicy linguine or the West Indian spice-encrusted tuna. You'll find a kids menu, but we wouldn't recommend taking children here past 8pm.

426 West Bay Rd., Seven Mile Beach. ✆ **345/946-6398.** www.aquabeach.ky. Sandwiches and wraps CI$7–CI$11; main courses CI$11–CI$28. MC, V. Mon–Fri 11am–1am; Sat–Sun 11am–midnight.

Bacchus Restaurant and Wine Bar ★ CARIBBEAN Located in the center of George Town and surrounded by office buildings and shops, this restaurant does most of its business at lunch and during the late afternoon, after nearby businesses have closed. Dozens of regulars enjoy cocktails after work, making a late afternoon here an especially good time to gain insight into the inner life of Grand Cayman. The restaurant and bar are decorated like a warm, welcoming tavern, with exposed brick and dark mahogany paneling. Lunches are simple, focusing on salads, sandwiches, light platters, and soups. Dinners are more elaborate and can be accompanied by glasses of any of the house wines, ranging from CI$6.95 to CI$8.95 a glass. Other cocktails, such as a melon-flavored piña colada, go for CI$6.50 to CI$10. If you just want to hang out at the bar and nibble on snacks and tapas, consider ordering the jerk-chicken quesadilla, the flash-fried calamari with jerk-seasoned tartar sauce, or an antipasto platter. Main courses at dinner may include partially seared tuna tataki, baked portobello mushrooms with Gorgonzola cheese, roasted and olive-crusted rack of lamb, and braised salmon with a seafood salad. The wide-ranging vegetarian options are very tasty as well.

Fort St., George Town. ✆ **345/949-5747.** www.bacchus.ky. Main courses CI$16–CI$30. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 10am–1am; Fri 10am–2am; Sat 11am–midnight.

Breezes by the Bay CARIBBEAN/INTERNATIONAL The "rhum deck" of this tropical grill draws a lot of cruise-ship passengers, as it lies right on the harbor—it's also idyllic for a sundowner. Happy hours on Friday and Saturday evenings are some of the most popular in the capital. There is food, too, which is served in a more formal atmosphere upstairs.

The chefs pride themselves on baking what is generally assumed to be the best conch fritters on the island. Conch also appears in a chowder (similar to New England clam chowder, but the meat is more rubbery). Marinated conch is a first for some visitors, and it's quite good, as are the West Indian crab cakes. Fishermen bring in the day's catch, which might be your best bet. You can also order a lot of standard fare such as smoked ribs, Jamaican jerk chicken, and fish and chips. Ever had shrimp cooked with sugar cane? Now's your chance. Bread and even the luscious ice creams are made from scratch.

Harbor Dr., George Town. ✆ **345/943-8439.** www.breezesbythebay.com. Main courses CI$12–CI$28. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 7am–10pm; Sun 10am–2pm.

The Brick House INTERNATIONAL This restaurant offers panoramic views out of floor-to-ceiling windows. Sunshine floods the restaurant during the day, giving it an open-air vibe. The friendly staff can make recommendations from the extensive menu. Your best bets are the seafood Monterey, grilled ginger tuna with a ginger-soy sauce,

the Cayman conch chowder, or the Cayman fettuccine with jerk chicken, shrimp, and red bell peppers. You can also choose from a wide selection of savory pizzas. Parts of the menu have a cheesy wannabe–*Sopranos* feel—for example, "Stallone Calzone," "Mama's Linguini," and "Meatball Ba Da Bing"—but the taste of the food makes up for it.

The Shoppes at Grand Harbour, Red Bay. ✆ **345/947-3456.** www.ourhousecayman.com. Reservations not required. Pizza CI$6.50–CI$15; main courses CI$9.50–CI$24. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–10pm.

Cafe Mediterraneo (Kids) MEDITERRANEAN This tavern and trattoria is managed by French-born Bruno Deluche and Tony Crescente, who also own two other restaurants on the island. The result is southern European service and cuisine tucked into a modern shopping center. The decor includes a mock version of a garden in Naples, banquettes patterned after grottos, and murals showing the highlights of both Monte Carlo and Capri. It's all very tongue-in-cheek, but despite a whiff of corniness, the food is well prepared and flavorful, and the place is rightfully popular, especially with families, who are drawn to its pizzas and pastas. Expect a menu with six kinds of pizza; a long list of pastas and risottos, including an excellent version of spaghetti with shrimp and lobster in a Parmesan cream-and-pesto sauce; and medallion of lobster tail in a creamy cognac sauce. On Thursday nights from 9 to 10pm, you can take a free salsa lesson and enjoy the open dance floor. On Sunday, check out the Big Kahuna comedy show. The revamped Sunday brunch buffet features omelets made right in front of you, as well as salads, chicken, and pastas.

In the Galleria Plaza, West Bay Rd. ✆ **345/949-8669.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat dinner. Pizza CI$11-CI$16; main courses CI$13–CI$30; Sun brunch CI$19. AE, DISC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–10:30pm; Sun brunch 11am–2:30pm.

Deckers Grille & Lounge CONTINENTAL One of the most appealing restaurants in the Caymans, Deckers allows diners to choose their atmosphere from three distinct areas. If you want casual dining, try the terrace, where live music can be heard on weekends. In the air-conditioned dining room, enjoy the original Caribbean paintings and couches for lounging. The backyard is the most tranquil of the areas, as diners listen to the calming sounds of water running in a triple-tier fountain. Our favorite part of the restaurant, however, is the bar. Built in an original English double-decker bus, the bar is the place to get anything from fine wines to tropical drinks to Metropolitan Martinis. The wine list has more than 70 labels. Otherwise, the extensive and well-prepared cuisine keeps people coming back. Excellent choices include the homemade porcobello mushroom ravioli, macadamia-nut-crusted black grouper, apple-cured and

grilled Chilean Key lime salmon, and Moroccan spiced rack of lamb. A children's menu is available.

Next to the Hyatt Regency Hotel, West Bay Rd. ✆ **345/945-6600.** www.deckers.ky. Main courses CI$19–CI$38. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 5:30–10:30pm.

Edoardo's ITALIAN This Sicilian-owned trattoria-cum-tavern draws a loyal patronage of full-time Grand Cayman residents who make Friday and Saturday dinner their culinary respite from home-cooked meals. The restaurant is located in a less-than-glamorous shopping center on the landlocked side of West Bay Road, completely lacking a view. Ironically, it is also recommended by the concierges of nearby upscale hotels. Food is served in generous portions in a no-nonsense, dark-paneled setting that might have been imported directly from a bar and grill in the suburbs of Detroit or Pittsburgh. However, considering that many of the clients aren't particularly interested in a restaurant theme of "Caribbean romance" (they're probably sick of that restaurant theme anyway), no one seems to care.

Begin your meal with zesty grilled shrimp and calamari in a garlic-and-lemon-flavored sauce, or barbecued Cajun prawns. The cioppino, or shellfish stew, is fabulous. Pastas come in dozens of different varieties; a favorite is tossed in a basil sauce with red potatoes. Mussels are piled high with your choice of four sauces—white wine with garlic, spicy marinara, saffron-flavored cream, or red-wine sauce—and served as either a starter or main course. The best fish and meats are a savory snapper *livornese,* made with capers and black olives; veal Edoardo (scaloppine topped with Parma ham and fontina cheese); and tenderloin of beef wrapped in bacon and served with Cambazola cheese and red-wine demi-glacé. If you're in the mood for pizza, choose from nine types, or build your own from 15 toppings, including blackened chicken and shrimp.

Coconut Place, West Bay Rd. ✆ **345/945-4408.** www.edoardos.ky. Reservations recommended on weekends. Pasta CI$13–CI$18; main courses CI$18–CI$32. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm; daily 5:30–10:30pm.

Full of Beans CAFE/COFFEEHOUSE/LIGHT FARE Don't you love the name? Even though it's a mere strip-mall cafe, the joint is warmly decorated with old wooden tables and floors, modern Italian chairs, mirror mosaics, and even a fake brick wall to add a more old-fashioned ambience. At this local favorite, you can begin with Belgian waffles in the morning and homemade soups or the lobster medallions later in the day.

Each day a special is posted for lunch, perhaps baked chicken with basmati rice and fresh vegetables. Among the most tempting platters are a cranberry brie salad with toasted nuts or a sesame-encrusted

tuna with a shiitake mushroom salad. You might also go for the chicken tandoori wrap. Desserts are rich and luscious, especially the carrot cake with a cream cheese glaze or the cheesecake with strawberries served with freshly whipped cream.

Pasadora Place, George Town. ✆ **345/943-2326.** www.caymangoodtaste.com. Main courses CI$7.95–CI$11. MC, V. Mon–Fri 7am–5pm; Sat 7am–4pm.

Gateway of India (Value) INDIAN Although some island restaurants might feature an Indian dish on their menus from time to time, this is the only purely Indian restaurant in the Cayman Islands, and as such, it's often sought out as a change of pace from Caribbean cuisine. The decor is warm, folkloric, and charming, with the interior illuminated with lanterns of embroidered fabric. Dishes are, as a matter of policy, prepared with a "medium" degree of spiciness, which you can doctor by instructing the staff (most of whom come from either Goa or Mumbai) according to your wishes. There's a wide array of meat, fish, and vegetarian dishes to choose from, but ongoing favorites include chicken *korma* in a mild curry sauce; chicken *tikka masala,* cooked in a medium-spicy, tomato-flavored butter sauce; and lamb vindaloo, served in a tomato-based, spicy curry sauce. All main courses come with saffron-flavored rice, pickles, yogurt, salad, and Indian breads. The lunch buffet is an excellent value on Grand Cayman.

Adjacent to the Strand Shopping Center, West Bay Rd. ✆ **345/946-2815.** Reservations recommended. Lunch CI$10–CI$15; lunch buffet CI$11; dinner CI$10–CI$24. AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2:30pm; daily 5:30–10pm.

Over the Edge CARIBBEAN The ambience at this eatery is just the opposite of what you'll find at the glossy venues of West Bay Road and downtown George Town. This remote and raffish restaurant is something of a mecca for residents of the sparsely populated North Side. A raucous crowd at the bar greets you at the entrance. Inside, the dining room walls block out sometimes-ferocious winds that batter this place during storms. Outside, you'll find a wharf-style terrace with pilings that extend straight down into the seabed. The views from the terrace have been described as mystical, especially on calm, moonlit nights. Lunches are relatively simple, focusing on Cayman-style steamed fish, pan-fried conch steak, turtle steak with port sauce, sandwiches stuffed with either tuna or mahimahi, and chef's salads. Dinners are more elaborate, featuring charbroiled rock-lobster tail, lobster thermidor, savory jumbo shrimp in Pernod sauce, grilled wahoo, and grilled breast of chicken with Dijonnaise sauce.

Old Man Bay, North Side. ✆ **345/947-9568.** Lunch CI$5–CI$32; dinner CI$10–CI$32. AE, MC, V. Daily 7am–10pm (bar till 1am).

Kill-Devil, the Drink of Choice

Since the late–16th century, rum has been associated with slavery. Slaves were imported to such places as Jamaica to do the backbreaking work of harvesting the sugar cane that would be distilled into rum at various distilleries on-island.

From Jamaica, barrels of rum were imported over to the Cayman Islands, where it became the drink of choice among islanders. Yankee traders, pirates, and bootleggers ruled the waters between Jamaica and the Caymans, islands that lay to Jamaica's immediate northwest.

Although the Caymans today have all the imported beer and liquors you could wish for, rum-laced tropical punches are still the most popular drinks. The average bar on all three islands offers a bewildering array of rum punches.

A word of caution: Be alert to your limits, especially if you're driving. The pastel-colored drinks can make visitors very drunk on very short notice because of their elevated sugar content, as well as the hot climate.

Rackham's Pub & Restaurant AMERICAN/CARIBBEAN If you're interested in an extensive menu and open-air dining with a beautiful view, then you should try this place. In the morning, you can watch boats coming to port, and in the evening you can see their lights as they head back out to sea. Your best bets here are the Caribbean shrimp, fish and chips, grilled mahimahi marinated in jerk sauce, Caesar salad, pan-fried grouper with rice and beans, and a wide array of curries and pastas.

93 N. Church St., George Town. ✆ **345/945-3860.** Reservations recommended for parties of 6 or more. Main courses CI$9.95– CI$33. AE, MC, V. Kitchen daily 10:30am–11pm. Bar Mon–Fri 9am–1am; Sat 10am–midnight; Sun 10:30am–midnight.

Ristorante Ragazzi ITALIAN This is one of our favorite Italian restaurants on Seven Mile Beach. It's located between two banks, in a shopping center adjacent to the entrance of the Hyatt. You can dine on a narrow terrace in front, but you'll be struck by the restaurant's real glamour inside, where you'll find a large, northern Italian–style blue-and-gold room with granite trim. This place is hip, fun, stylish, and breezily upscale, drawing a clientele of worldly residents who work in the financial-services industries. Lunches are lighter and less

formal than dinners, with a medley of salads, about a dozen pastas (including a version with crayfish and crabmeat), unusual pizzas (including an "Austrian" version with brie cheese and smoked Parma ham), and elegant platters of mostly white-meat and fish dishes such as chicken scaloppine with Marsala-and-mushroom sauce, and sautéed peppered yellowfin tuna with a red-bell-pepper sauce. Dinners range from a blue-crab spring roll and lobster quesadillas to rosemary-marinated duck breast with an orange demi-glacé, and pan-seared sea bass served with capers and black olives.

Buckingham Sq., West Bay Rd. ✆ **345/945-3484.** www.eragazzi.com. Reservations recommended Fri–Sat dinner. Lunch CI$12–CI$19; dinner CI$15–CI$35. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–11pm.

Thai Orchid THAI This is the only spot on Grand Cayman that serves the intricately flavored and sometimes fiery cuisine of Thailand. The interior is graceful, elegant, and rather formal, with black lacquer furniture and lots of Thai paintings; the waitresses are beautifully outfitted in formal Thai costumes. Favorite dishes include divine Thai-style lobster and squid with red-curry sauce, Pad Thai, stir-fried chicken with cashews and bell peppers, curries, Thai-style spring rolls, and a deep-fried whole red snapper topped with Thai-style chili sauce (the best dish, in our opinion). A lunch buffet is served on Tuesday and Thursday.

In the Queen's Court Shopping Plaza, West Bay Rd. ✆ **345/949-7955.** www.thaiorchid.ky. Lunch CI$14–CI$19; dinner CI$15–CI$35. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm; daily 6–10pm.

4 INEXPENSIVE

Al la Kebab KABOBS If you're in the mood for a convivial outdoor snack with the young, the restless, and the wasted, consider driving over to this late-night joint for kabobs, open after most other restaurants have closed for the night. The setting is a vividly painted clapboard shack plunked down in a parking lot adjacent to the island's biggest theater. There's no dining room here, but the dashboard of your car works quite nicely as a table. The tasty, juicy kabobs—lamb, chicken, or beef—are seasoned with fresh herbs and grilled to perfection. They can be doused with any of a half-dozen varieties of sauce. Your hosts are Alan Silverman and Laura Wintermut (both from Canada), and their Caymanian partner, Frank McCoy.

Lawrence Blvd., adjacent to the cinema, across from World's Gym. ✆ **345/943-4343.** Kabobs CI$4–CI$7.50. No credit cards. Mon–Fri 11am–4am; Sat 11am–2am; Sun 11am–8pm.

Chicken! Chick en! (Kids) AMERICAN This v enue completely lacks glamour, but within its cheer ful and unpretentious premises (it looks like the interior of a brightly painted C reole cottage), y ou can feed a family for less money than at vir tually any other restaurant on the island. The specialty, and the only available main course, is tender, richly seasoned, perfectly cooked chicken. As many as 32 chickens at a time r otate enticingly in the glar e of the island 's biggest and most theatrical r otisserie, pr ominently positioned near the r estaurant's entrance. Each chicken is flav ored with herbs and a touch of garlic. After placing your order at the stand-up counter, you can opt to dine in the restaurant, or you can haul your chicken away for consumption somewhere else. The chicken (br east, thigh, or whole r oasted birds, depending on y our or der) is accompanied b y cornbr ead and y our choice of coleslaw, rice, or beans.

In the West Shore Shopping Plaza, West Bay Rd. ✆ **345/945-2290.** Lunch CI$7–CI$8; dinner CI$9–CI$11. AE, MC, V. Daily 11am–10pm.

Cimboco Caribbean Cafe INTERNATIONAL Whimsical and tongue-in-cheek, this charming spot occupies a modern building very close to Grand Cayman's only movie theater. The venue is deceptively simple: At first glance, y ou might imagine y ou're in a cafe that just serves coffee and drinks, but a quick peek at the menu r eveals a sophisticated medley of pizzas, salads, Caribbean-style r oti (pancake-type bread with various fillings), and a full bar ser ving the fiesta-colored drinks y ou might expect at a br eezy beachside joint. The caramelized scallops served with mango-flavored salsa are an excellent starter. Caesar salads can be garnished with grilled chicken or grilled shrimp. Pizzas can be livened up with all sor ts of toppings, including slices of jer k chicken and lamb sausage. O ther dishes include pastas (such as a thr ee-cheese chicken fettuccine) and an oft-changing array of daily specials and soups. Canada-born Tom and M eg Lasley ar e your charming and har dworking hosts, whose culinar y philosophy directs them to create all their food "from scratch" using only the finest and healthiest ingredients.

In the Marquee Shopping Center, near the corner of the Harquail Bypass and West Bay Rd. ✆ **345/947-2782.** w ww.cimboco.com. Reser vations r ecommended for parties of 6 or more. Pizzas, burgers, and platters CI$8–CI$13. AE, MC, V. Sat–Thurs 7am–10pm; Fri 7am–11pm.

Corita's C opper K ettle ★ (Value) CARIBBEAN/AMERICAN This place is generally packed in the mornings, when you can enjoy a full American br eakfast or a wide selection of West Indian breakfast specialties, like gr een bananas ser ved with fried dumplings, fried flying fish, and Corita's Special (ham, melted cheese, egg, and fr uit jelly all presented on a fried fritter). For lunch, the menu varies from salads

Finds Antica Gelateria

After spending several sunny hours on Seven Mile Beach or exploring Grand Cayman's reefs, who doesn't want ice cream? Better yet, how about a near-authentic Italian *gelato?* **Antica Gelateria,** in the Marquee Shopping Center, Harquail Bypass near West Bay Road (✆ **345/946-1400**), near the previously recommended Cimboco Caribbean Cafe, has the perfect scoop to cool the effects of the noontime sun. Stop here after dinner and you'll experience one of the more unexpected nightlife spots on Grand Cayman (p. 153).

to chicken and beef along with conch, turtle, or lobster prepared as burgers or in a hearty stew.

Edward St., George Town. ✆ **345/949-2696.** Reservations required. Main courses CI$8–CI$16; lunch CI$9–CI$10. No credit cards. Mon–Sat 7am–5pm.

Hard Rock Cafe Cayman Islands AMERICAN In terms of the dollar amount of business it generates, this restaurant blows every other eatery in George Town way out of the water. Most of the restaurant's business is conducted at lunchtime, when long lines of hungry cruise ship passengers are handled efficiently, and vast quantities of party-colored drinks, commemorative T-shirts, and American-derived comfort food are sold at speeds and quantities that would make any restaurant deeply envious. On the street level, you'll find a faux-Victorian bar, a T-shirt boutique, and a waiting area for diners. The dining room lies at the top of a wide staircase on the building's second floor. You'll spot framed photographs of Mick Jagger and Bob Marley, outfits worn by Madonna and Buddy Holly, and more. Suspended from the ceiling, just above the stairwell that leads up to the dining room, is part of a 1959 pink Cadillac.

The most popular drink is the Hurricane, made from three kinds of rum and three kinds of fruit juice. Menu items include burgers, Reuben sandwiches, meal-size salads, steaks, pastas, Pig Sandwiches (barbecued pork with french fries), fish and chips, and a particularly comforting version of meatloaf. Evenings here, after the departure of the cruise ships, are much less crowded than lunchtime.

43 S. Church St., George Town. ✆ **345/945-2020.** Reservations accepted only for parties of 10 or more. Main courses CI$7.95–CI$19. AE, DISC, MC, V. Daily 10am–1am.

Harry's Caribbean Bar & Grill CARIBBEAN This little hole-in-the-wall restaurant gives off a Caribbean home-style vibe. The pink-and-blue walls are cliché, but who cares? The distinctly local

menu includes down-home favorites such as fried chicken, fish stew, curry goat, and ox ear. Harry Cupid, the owner, loves his little restaurant, and his staff is very welcoming. The adjacent bar serves tropical rum drinks.

Tropical Plaza, George Town. ✆ **345/945-2025.** Main courses CI$7–CI$11. MC, V. Mon–Fri 7am–1am; Sat 11am–11pm; Sun 7am–8pm.

Icoa Cafe LIGHT FARE This cafe was moved in 2005 from a Caymanian house to its current place in a minimalist shop. Although some of its charm was lost in the transition, the cafe can now seat 30, as opposed to only six in its previous home. The mosaic-tile floor is as fancy as this place gets. But if you're in the mood for pastries, sandwiches, or wraps, this is as good a place as any. Your best bets are the pan-seared-salmon wrap, the ham-and-brie sandwich, or one of the salads. Specialty breads are the highlights of the menu.

7 Mile Shops, No. 11, Seven Mile Beach Rd. ✆ **345/945-1915.** www.icoacafe.com. Sandwiches and salads CI$8.50–CI$18; dinner main courses CI$14–CI$28. AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 7am–6pm; Fri–Sat 7am–11pm; Sun 8am–3pm.

Mezza INTERNATIONAL Hip, breezy, European-ized, and urban, this restaurant sits one floor above a landmark liquor store (Big Daddy's), immediately adjacent to the Treasure Island Hotel. This is an eatery that you might expect to find in South Beach, Miami. Lunches are simple, featuring steak sandwiches, burgers, Caesar salads, and seafood pasta. The dinner menu is more artful, with dishes that include bacon-wrapped mahimahi; basil-encrusted salmon steaks; sautéed shrimp with wine sauce and asparagus; steak au poivre with pommes frites; and fettuccine with jerk chicken. Caramel pecan fudge cake or the crème brûlée make for enticing desserts.

233 West Bay Rd. ✆ **345/946-3992.** Reservations recommended. Main courses CI$21–CI$32. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–3pm and 5–10pm.

Seaharvest Restaurant ★ INTERNATIONAL This place hosts a pleasing mix of local residents and visitors, all enjoying a cuisine with origins reaching from Europe to India. You won't notice the restaurant from South Church Street because it's hidden behind rows of greenery and separated from the Sunset House (p. 69) by a parking lot. Within a plush, high-ceilinged dining room accented with bubbling aquariums and elaborate draperies, you can enjoy a lunch of burgers, salads, pastas, coconut shrimp, salmon poached with orange slices—our favorite—and "calypso chicken," stuffed with ham and cheese, dredged in coconut flakes, and served with a raspberry-mango sauce. Dinners feature grilled shrimp wrapped in bacon and served with a honey-mustard sauce, roasted breast of duck with a Thai chili sauce, chicken *tikka masala* (curried tomato sauce), and several different lobster

options. Lamb *banjara,* slow-cooked with spices in the southern Indian tradition, is an excellent choice if you like Indian food.

At the Sunset House, 390 S. Church St. ✆ **345/945-1383.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat dinner. Lunch CI$1–CI$24; dinner CI$13–CI$28. AE, DISC, MC, V. Daily 7am–10pm.

Seymour's Jerk Centre JAMAICAN In the parking lot of Roy's Boutique, Seymour Silburn runs this authentic joint, serving the best jerk chicken this side of Jamaica. Marinated according to a secret recipe, the chicken is cooked over a charcoal grill. His jerk pork is also a winner. Picnic tables are placed out back, and Seymour's couldn't be more casual. You come here for the tasty food, not the romantic atmosphere. If you really want to put hair on your chest, ask for "Manish water." Fresh fish is also fried, and you might begin with a conch soup.

Shedden Rd., George Town. ✆ **345/945-1931.** Main courses CI$9–CI$17. No credit cards. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–1am; Fri 11:30am–3am; Sat 11:30am–1am.

Triple Crown ENGLISH PUB FARE You know you're in a British colony when you eat here. The food of Henry VIII is served, more or less with success. Many locals patronize the joint on Sunday when "ye olde roast beef pudding" is served. It consists of a slab of roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, new potatoes, and fresh vegetables. At other times, you can feast on pub-grub favorites like shepherd's pie, beef-and-ale pie, and steak-and-kidney pie. These pies are justifiably the kitchen's most ordered items. The full English breakfast is a delight and served all day, and you can also order French toast and pancakes. Desserts are homemade and old-fashioned, including sticky toffee pudding or apple and blueberry crumble.

Marquee Plaza, Seven Mile Rd., Seven Mile Beach. ✆ **345/943-7821.** Main courses CI$9–CI$17. AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri 10:30am–1am; Sat–Sun 9am–midnight.

Vivine's Kitchen ★ (Finds) WEST INDIAN Native Caymanian Vivine Watler runs this charming restaurant from a terrace beside her home on an isolated stretch of road in the East End. Identifiable by large signs in psychedelic colors, it beckons to motorists who appreciate a bit of local flavor in a landscape that's otherwise isolated and a bit lonely. You dine at plastic tables that are set either on a cement terrace surrounded by lattices or amid sea grapes, close to the edge of the sea. Don't underestimate Vivine's local fame within Caymanian society: When we were last here, an eminently respected, middle-aged hostess arrived from faraway West Bay, having driven almost 2 hours (each way) to retrieve a pot of conch stew, with the intention of serving it at a dinner party for old-time Caymanians who missed "cooking the way it used to be." Menu items are written on a blackboard, and

change with the av ailability of ingr edients. The tastiest offerings ar e fried fish, chicken and chips, cheeseburgers, tuna sandwiches, conch stew, turtle stew, whelk stew, barbecued ribs, and pork chops. Dessert choices almost always include "heavy cakes, " made fr om raw grated cassava, yam, or br eadfruit. D rinks include fr esh juice made fr om mangos, tamarinds, and carr ots, as well as old-fashioned lemonade.

Gun Bay, East End. ✆ **345/947-7435.** Main courses CI$5–CI$11. No cr edit cards. Daily 11am–7pm.

5

Beaches, Scuba Diving & Other Outdoor Pursuits

The unbeatable factors of almost-guaranteed sunshine, one of the world's most beautiful beaches, and the Caribbean's best scuba diving and snorkeling have permanently anchored Grand Cayman on the tourist map.

Grand Cayman has a number of smaller beaches, but its so-called **Seven Mile Beach** (actually 8.9km/5½ miles) is the major attraction, with its vast expanses of powdery white sand. Unlike the beaches on some islands to the south, such as Jamaica, Seven Mile Beach is litter-free and also relatively free of peddlers hawking souvenirs.

The beach is so big that there's always plenty of room for everybody, even in the midst of the winter tourist season and at the peak of the cruise ship arrivals. Most of Grand Cayman's hotels, restaurants, and shopping centers are found along this much-frequented strip of sand. Many scuba-diving and watersports outfitters are also based here.

Along with swimmers and beach buffs, scuba divers travel to the Cayman Islands in droves from around the world. As diver Bob Soto—who opened the first dive shop in the Caribbean back in 1957—puts it, "If there's any spot on the planet that God created just for divers, it is Grand Cayman." One-third of all visitors to the Cayman Islands come specifically to go scuba diving or snorkeling.

The Cayman Islands proudly boast more than 200 named and explored dive sites. Some of the most dramatic dive sites have not been thoroughly explored (and unfortunately aren't on the itineraries of most outfitters), owing to the massive coral reefs and drop-offs that surround all three Cayman Islands. Dive outfitters are familiar with the best of the accessible dive sites and will guide you to what interests you the most. The Cayman Islands have the most reliable outfitters in the Caribbean, complementing the Islands' reputation as one of the world's greatest scuba-diving destinations.

Even if you're not a scuba diver or snorkeler, you'll find many other attractions on the water, including fishing, boating, and windsurfing. If you're a landlubber, there's always golfing and horseback riding. But most landlubbers never seem to leave Seven Mile Beach.

Note: Some outfitters quote prices in both U.S. and Cayman dollars; others, especially those patronized almost exclusively by foreign visitors, quote their prices in U.S. dollars. We've quoted prices in this chapter according to the currency favored by each individual outfitter.

1 HITTING THE BEACHES

One of the finest beaches in the Caribbean, Grand Cayman's **Seven Mile Beach** ★★★ (technically, the beach is named West Bay Beach, but everybody calls it Seven Mile Beach) is a haven of white, white sand, Australian pines, and palm trees, stretching all the way from George Town to Long Point. It tends to be crowded near the big resorts, but the beach is so big that you can always find room to spread out your towel.

Because the beach is on the more tranquil western side of Grand Cayman, the water is generally placid and inviting with no great tide, making it ideal for families, even those with small children. A sandy bottom slopes gently to deep water. The water is great for snorkelers and swimmers of most ages and abilities, and it's so clear that you can easily see what's swimming around underwater.

Along the stretch of the beach, from one end to the other, are hotels and condos. The beach hotels have bars and restaurants open to nonguests, and most of these hotels also have watersports kiosks where you can book parasailing and windsurfing excursions or rent snorkeling equipment. Independent watersports concessions, including places to rent snorkeling gear, boats, windsurfers, WaveRunners, paddlecats, and aqua trikes (the latter two are floating pedal toys), can also be easily found along the beach.

Of all the bars and restaurants strung along Seven Mile, one of the friendliest is the **Beach Club Colony Hotel & Dive Resort,** West Bay Road (p. 66; ✆ **345/949-8100**), which welcomes nonguests. The modern Caribbean restaurant is open daily from 7:30am to 9pm and the beach bar is open Monday to Friday 10am to 12:45pm and Saturday and Sunday 11am to 11:45pm. For divers, a special offer here is a certified boat-diving package costing US$95 per person, including a two-tank boat dive. The on-site dive shop is open daily from 7am to 5pm.

Grand Cayman does have a number of minor beaches, although they pale in comparison to Seven Mile Beach. Visit these if you want to escape the crowds. Beaches on the east and north coasts of Grand Cayman are good—filled with white sand and protected by an offshore barrier reef, so waters are generally tranquil.

Just to the north of Seven Mile Beach, **Cemetery Reef** and its public beach are good spots for snorkeling. Cemetery Beach—at the southern tier of Boggy Sand Road—is reached by following the cemetery that's located opposite the fire station on the northern tip of West Bay Road.

In total contrast to the glitz and glitter of Seven Mile Beach, an attractive little beach lies on the west side of George Town. **Smith Cove Public Beach** is located between Coconut Harbour and Cayman Coves. The sandy strip is small but top-notch. It's a good spot for snorkeling and a nice venue for a picnic beneath the shade. Changing facilities and bathrooms are available on-site.

On North Sound along the northern coast, **Rum Point** ★ lies 40km (25 miles) north of George Town and offers one of the best beaches in Grand Cayman, though it is also one of the most remote. Calm, clear waters make this tree-shaded beach an excellent spot for swimming. Snorkeling is also good here, with rainbow-hued fish and swaying sea fans comprising the majority of the under water life. The site has changing facilities, public toilets, and showers. On-site is the **Wreck Bar & Grill** (p. 152) if you want a drink. Sunday is our favorite time to visit, when locals stop by in their boats and bring a gregarious and animated atmosphere to the bar. On-site watersports activities are run by the reputable **Red Sail Sports** (see below).

One of our favorite beaches is on the north coast, bordering the **Cayman Kai Beach Resort,** directly to the southwest of Rum Point. This beach is a Caribbean cliché of charm, with palm trees and beautiful sands. You can snorkel along the reef to Rum Point. The beach is also ideal as a Sunday-afternoon picnic spot. There are bathrooms and changing facilities.

The best windsurfing is found in the East End, at the beach near the settlement of **Colliers,** reached along Queen's Highway and lying near Morritt's Tortuga Club.

2 SCUBA DIVING & SNORKELING

What they lack in nightlife, the Cayman Islands make up for in watersports activities, especially scuba diving and snorkeling. Coral reefs and coral formations encircle each island and are filled with marine life, which scuba divers and snorkelers are forbidden by law to disturb. ***Important:*** For our recommendations of the best scuba-diving and snorkeling sites, see p. 3 and 7, respectively.

The full diving scene in the Cayman Islands could fill a book unto itself—in fact, it could fill several. If you're a serious diver, pick up one

Wreck of the 10 Sails

On February 8, 1794, Captain William Martin was steering a lead ship, HMS *Convert,* when it hit a reef. The captain fired a cannon to signal a fleet of other merchant vessels about the treacherous reefs that lay ahead. The captains of the other ships mistook the signal for a warning of an impending pirate attack. One vessel after another in the convoy of 58 merchants ships, most of them square-rigged sailing vessels bound for Europe, met the same fate as the *Convert* in the rough, pitch-black seas.

In all, 10 ships were wrecked that disastrous night. By some miracle, villagers of the East End of Grand Cayman managed to save all 400 or so sailors and officers, bringing them ashore in canoes. Four of the ships were eventually salvaged, while the other vessels sank to the bottom of the sea. The ships' cannons were recovered and sent to England during World War II as scrap.

In the little community of Gun Bay in the East End, a monument can be seen commemorating that tragic maritime event. Queen Elizabeth II dedicated the statue on her visit to Grand Cayman in 1994. A local legend—untrue—maintains that King George II gave the Caymanians tax-free status because of their heroic rescue. If you'd like to explore this shipwreck site, it is often included in the diving programs offered by **Ocean Frontiers** (p. 110).

of the comprehensive guidebooks. The best one we've seen is a paperback, *The Dive Sites of the Cayman Islands: Over 260 Top Dive and Snorkel Sites* by Lawson Wood.

It's easy to dive close to shore, so boats aren't necessary, although plenty of diving boats are available. For certain excursions, we recommend a trip with a qualified dive master. Many dive shops offer rentals, but they won't rent you scuba gear or supply air unless you have a card from one of the international diving schools, such as NAUI or PADI. Hotels also rent diving equipment to their guests who are certified divers, and will arrange snorkeling and scuba-diving trips.

Universally regarded as the most up-to-date and best-equipped watersports facility in the Cayman Islands, **Red Sail Sports** maintains its administrative headquarters at Coconut Place (P.O. Box 31473,

Grand Cayman KY1-1206; ✆ **877/REDSAIL** [733-7245] in the U.S., or 345/945-5965; www.redsailcayman.com) and its largest, best-accessorized branch at the Grand Cayman Beach Suites, West Bay Road (✆ **345/949-8745**). Other locations are at the Westin Casuarina (✆ **345/949-8732**); at Rum Point (✆ **345/947-9203**); at the Marriott Beach Resort (✆ **345/949-6343**); at the Courtyard by Marriott (✆ **345/946-5481**); and at Morritt's Tortuga Club (✆ **345/947-2097**).

Red Sail has the most comprehensive watersports program on the island, including all equipment rentals for everything from a banana-boat tube ride to kayaking and water-skiing. Certified divers can choose from a variety of boat dives each day. A two-tank morning or afternoon dive goes for US$120, with a one-tank afternoon boat dive costing US$75. Special dives include a one-tank Stingray City dive for US$75 and a one-tank night dive for the same price. Full PADI open-water certification costs US$450 to US$550. All types of scuba gear can be rented.

The company also offers boat trips, including parasailing excursions. Catamaran sails are provided, the most popular being a 4 1/2-hour jaunt to Stingray City, with lunch and snorkeling included, that goes for US$88 for adults or half-price for children 12 and under. Two-hour sunset sails along the North Sound cost US$40 for adults or half-price for children 12 and under, and you can also book a dinner catamaran cruise for US$75 for adults or half-price for children 12 and under. Catamaran snorkeling trips cost US$55 or half-price for children.

Divetech, Cobalt Coast Resort & Suites, 18 Sea Fan Dr., Boatswains Bay (✆ **888/946-5656** or 345/946-5658; www.divetech.com), is one of the best organized and most attentive outfitters, with a fine reputation and a location near deep marine walls and drop-offs that divers find superb, if not the best shore diving on the islands. The operation is headquartered in a clapboard-covered cottage on the grounds of the recommended Cobalt Coast Resort and Suites (p. 67), on Grand Cayman's most northwestern tip, far from the sparkle of Seven Mile Beach. The coastline is treacherously jagged, covered with bruising rocks that can puncture the side of any watercraft that ventures too close. Consequently, Divetech boats moor at a massive 36m (118-ft.) concrete pier that juts seaward. From here, within a relatively short distance, divers have access to a cornucopia of dive options that are difficult to duplicate anywhere else.

Many, but not all, of Divetech's clients opt to stay at its well-recommended associated hotel, Cobalt Coast Resort and Suites. Those who don't stay at Cobalt Coast must either drive or make special

Tips Evermore Outfitters

The **Cayman Islands Department of Tourism** website, **www.caymanislands.ky**, has a comprehensive list of all diving and snorkeling outfitters on the islands. We've listed our favorites, but the options don't end there.

arrangements for transportation from hotels on other parts of the island. Activity prices are invariably cheaper when they're clustered within one of the resort's many dive packages, but for a rough idea, a two-tank dive for certified divers costs US$110, and a 3½-hour resort course for a first-timer goes for US$125. Open-water certification costs US$450. Guided shore dives are US$55.

Canadian-born Nancy Romanica is Divetech's founder and creative force. She's also an authority on the curious pastime known as free-diving, recommended only for very experienced divers, where aficionados reach alarming depths using only their carefully trained lung capacities (as in, without scuba tanks). The cost for a guided free dive and a lesson (usually taught by Nancy herself) is US$110 per person for a half-day and US$220 per person for a full day.

Eden Rock Diving Center, 124 S. Church St., in George Town (✆ **345/949-7243;** www.edenrockdive.com), specializes in dives to Eden Rock and Devil's Grotto, hailed as two of the best dive sites in the Caribbean. A full line of scuba and snorkeling equipment is available for rent, with a two-tank dive going for US$95. Snorkeling trips cost US$30.

Ocean Frontiers Reef Resort, Austin Connelly Drive, East End (✆ **800/348-6096** or 345/947-7500; www.oceanfrontiers.com), is a well-run outfitter highlighting underwater attractions in the East End, where just offshore are pristine reefs and easy access to wall diving. This tends to be a less crowded dive center than around the West End. Its specialty is PADI-certified open-water dive instruction priced at US$399. A half-day program, which includes classroom instruction and pool practice, followed by a shallow reef dive, goes for US$139.

Oh Boy Charters (✆ **345/949-6341;** www.ohboycharters.com) will pick you up and take you out on a motorboat to a sandbar where stingrays gather, and will also provide snorkeling equipment. The crew will help you on and off the boat on the sandbar, where you're surrounded by the graceful creatures that look as if they are flying in the water. They'll even "kiss" you. If you kiss one of them back, it's supposed to bring good luck. At least we hope so.

Although many guests "kiss" the stingrays, we recommend you do so at your own risk. In addition to frolicking with the rays, the boat also stops off at Coral Gardens, where you can snorkel and take in a preview of underwater life. Including the pickup, the whole trip costs US$39 for adults or US$27.50 for kids ages 4 to 11. From start to finish, the tour takes more than 3 hours. You can also book a full-day tour, including a beach lunch and a conch dive.

Don Foster's Dive, 218 S. Church St., George Town (✆ **800/833-4837** or 345/949-5679; www.donfosters.com) operates from the waterfront at Casuarina Point in George Town. At its headquarters, there's also a pool with a shower. Boat dives are featured as well as offshore snorkeling. A two-tank dive costs US$95 with night dives going for US$55.

Seven Mile Watersports, West Bay Road (✆ **345/949-0332;** www.7milediver.com), operates from the Seven Mile Beach Resort and Club and is particularly sensitive to the requests of individual divers. The outfitter takes out only 15 divers at a time in its 12m (39-ft.) boat. Most jaunts are to the north wall. A one-tank boat dive costs US$65, and a two-tank dive goes for US$100. A snorkel trip to Stingray City costs US$40 per person.

Off the Wall Divers, West Bay Road (✆ **345/945-7525;** www.otwdivers.com), also caters to the individual diver as it specializes in custom dive trips for groups of 2 to 10, but no more. The outfitter offers resort training courses, as well as full and Nitrox certifications. A one-tank dive goes for US$70, two tanks for US$99. A PADI open-water certification course costs only US$600 per person in a group of three or more. Resort scuba courses cost US$120, and equipment rentals, including dive computers, are available for rent.

Another good dive outfit, **Tortuga Divers** (✆ **345/947-2097;** www.tortugadivers.com), operates out of Morritt's Tortuga Club and Resort at East End, site of what are described as the best windsurfing conditions in the Cayman Islands, with easy access to the rich marine life. This outfitter caters to both experienced and novice divers, offering dives, whenever business justifies it, at 9am and 2pm. Half-day or full-day snorkeling adventures can also be arranged at the same time, and all types of gear are available for rent. The morning two-tank scuba dive costs US$110, and the afternoon one-tank dive goes for US$75. A half-day's snorkeling costs US$50, going up to US$75 for a full day, the price including lunch.

Although nearly every scuba outfitter also offers snorkeling tours, the best outfitter just for snorkeling is **Captain Marvin's Watersports,** Cayman Falls Shopping Center, Seven Mile Beach (✆ **345/945-6975;** www.captainmarvins.com). Captain Marvin, who launched his tours with a borrowed sailboat in the 1950s, is now one of the

Moments Your Temporary Caymanian Pet: A Stingray

Grand Cayman is home to one of the most unusual underwater attractions in the world, **Stingray City** ★★. Set in the sun-flooded, 4m-deep (13-ft.) waters of North Sound, about 3km (2 miles) east of the island's northwestern tip, the site started to become popular in the mid-1980s when local fishermen would clean their catches and dump the offal overboard. They began to notice scores of stingrays (which usually eat marine crabs) feeding on the debris, a phenomenon that quickly attracted local divers and marine zoologists. Today, between 30 and 50 relatively tame sting rays hover around the site for daily handouts of squid and ballyhoo from increasing hordes of snorkelers and divers. About half a dozen entrepreneurs lead expeditions from points along Seven Mile Beach, traveling around the landmass of Conch Point to the feeding grounds. The previously recommended **Red Sail Sports** (p. 108) offers one-tank scuba dives to Stingray City, priced at US$80; snorkel excursions cost between US$30 and US$80.

Warning: Stingrays possess deeply penetrating and viciously barbed stingers capable of inflicting painful damage to anyone who mistreats them. Need we mention the death in 2006 of Australian animal adventurer Steve Irwin, who received a barb from a stingray directly in his chest? A local spokesperson for Red Sail emphasizes that Irwin's stingray was of a more aggressive and larger breed than what you're likely to encounter in the Cayman Islands. She referred to the relatively tame beasts in Caymanian waters as equivalent to "big, sloppy puppy dogs," and the experience overall as "great fun." Nevertheless, we are not amused by this as a pastime, and simply cannot gush with any genuine thrill or enthusiasm. (Frankly, we prefer domesticated, landlubber dogs and cats.) If you opt for an adventure with one of these underwater beasts "close up, touchy-feely, and personal," be alert, and don't make any fast moves (the rays can panic, we're told). And above all, as the divers say, never try to grab one by the tail.

leading charter-boat operators in Grand Cayman. A 2 1/2-hour trip, including stops at Stingray City and the Barrier Reef, costs US$35 for participants 12 and over, and US$27 for ages 4 to 11. A 3-hour trip goes for US$40 for ages 12 and over, or US$27 for ages 4 to 11. The full-day excursion, including lunch, costs US$65 for ages 12 and over, or US$45 for ages 4 to 11. All prices include snorkel gear and instruction if required and food for feeding the stingrays.

Watersports buffs use **Captain Bryan's,** North Church Street, George Town (✆ **345/949-0038;** www.cayman.org/captainbryan), for snorkeling, fishing, and sailing trips on 15m (49-ft.) boats. Sunset sails and private snorkeling charters are also available. A half-day trip costs US$35, or US$27 for children 9 and under.

Captain Crosby's Watersports, Coconut Place, West Bay Road (✆ **345/916-1725;** www.cayman.org/crosby), was a pioneer of snorkeling trips to Stingray City. The outfitter still conducts 3-hour trips to the site on a 12m (39-ft.) trimaran for US$375. A freshly prepared seafood lunch is part of the package. Bonefishing and reef-fishing trips can also be arranged.

Ambassador Divers, located in the Comfort Suites Resort on West Bay Road, Seven Mile Beach (✆ **345/743-5513;** www.ambassadordivers.com), is a small dive operation that usually takes out no more than eight passengers at a time. Trips feature the North and South Wall diving areas. PADI certification courses are offered, and dive packages are available, a 2-day deal going for US$180 per person.

Cayman Aggressor IV (✆ **800/348-2628** or 985/385-2628; www.aggressor.com) was designed by divers for divers. Participants are taken out for week-long cruises aboard a 110-foot boat. The living is simple, and the chow is basic. The boat has private cabins and an on-board cook. An inclusive package ranges from US$2,495 to US$2,895.

In addition to the outfitters listed above, you will easily find dozens of kiosks along Seven Mile Beach renting snorkeling gear.

3 MORE FUN IN THE SURF

BOAT RENTALS

Many travelers dream of sailing their own boat beneath an azure Caribbean sky, without the company of a crew. Alas, unless you're a very experienced sailor, and unless you can afford it, it might not be feasible to rent one of the very large sailing vessels that are the norm

at most boat charter outfits (and often require a substantial cash deposit before a newcomer will be entrusted to take it out onto the deep blue sea). However, there are numerous ways for less experienced sailors to rent small boats.

Small (about 3.3m-long/11-ft.) sailing craft are the specialty at the **Cayman Islands Sailing Club,** Spinnaker Road, Red Bay, near the hamlet of North Sound (✆ **345/947-7913;** www.sailing.ky). On a sunbaked, gravel-covered compound, isolated from the traffic and congestion of West Bay, you'll find a two-story warehouse crafted from wood planks and corrugated metal panels, a clubhouse with its own trophy-filled bar, and an inventory of about 70 small-scale sailboats, usually Picos, Lasers, or (least high-tech of all) simple sailing dinghies, each suitable for one or two persons. Most boats rent for 2-hour periods, time enough to do some quality brisk sailing in Grand Cayman's North Sound. Boat rentals are CI$30 to CI$40 per hour. Rentals are available every day from 9am to 5pm and require at least a rudimentary level of sailing experience. If you don't feel completely proficient, you can sign up for a series of sailing lessons, each lasting 8 hours, for a fee of around CI$600.

SUBMARINE RIDES ★

Atlantis Adventures (✆ **866/546-7820** in the U.S., or 345/949-7700 from the Cayman Islands or other parts of the world; www.atlantisadventures.net) is the better established of two outfits on Grand Cayman, both of which promise to take you, safely and panoramically, beneath the surface of the waves. The company provides underwater tours with views of the remarkable geology beneath the sea around Grand Cayman. Each trip departs from a clearly signposted building set directly on the waterfront of George Town, immediately south of the cruise ship piers.

The cheapest submarine experience, limited to relatively shallow waters, is offered within the ***Seaworld Explorer*** semi-submarine. Developed in Australia for viewing marine life from the surface of the Great Barrier Reef, this is a steel-hulled watercraft that only appears unusual beneath the waterline (it looks like a regular boat from above). In the ship's lowest level, in cramped proximity to up to 45 other passengers, you'll be seated next to windows that angle downward for panoramic views of the deep. Because the ship never descends beneath the surface of the sea, a ride is best suited for viewing sun-flooded reefs, shipwrecks, and objects lying no more than 7.5m (25 ft.) beneath the surface. Part of the attraction of this trip derives from the scuba divers who dispense scraps of fish to all manner of hungry marine life, including Bermuda chubs, sergeant majors,

and angelfish. One-hour boat rides are priced at US$34 per adult, and US$19 per child age 2 to 12.

The second option is aboard the ***Atlantis*** submarine, a fully submersible craft holding 48 passengers. A 75-minute tour priced at US$89 per person descends to depths of 30m (98 ft.). Tickets for children ages 4 to 12 cost US$59, and teenagers (ages 13 to 17) are charged US$69 each. No children under 4 are permitted onboard. There's plenty to see underwater at this depth, as enough sunlight reaches down to allow for the growth of thousands of kinds of plant life, vital for the sustenance of an equally impressive number of species of fish. This is the most popular, and perhaps the most visually rewarding, of the submarine experiences.

The competitor is the 60-passenger ***Nautilus,*** Bush Centre, George Town (✆ **345/945-1355;** www.nautilus.ky), a semi-submarine with a protected glass hull that cruises only 1.5m (5 ft.) below the sea's surface—not exactly the full submarine experience. The craft, named after Jules Verne's futuristic vessel, departs from Rackham's Dock behind Rackham's pub in George Town. The trips take visitors to the *Cali* and *Balboa* shipwrecks and on to Cheeseburger Reef, where passengers can view divers feeding the fish. Departures are daily at 11am and 3pm, with the afternoon tour allowing passengers 30 minutes of snorkel time. The morning tour takes 1 hour, and costs CI$31 for adults and CI$15 for children 3 to 12; the afternoon tour takes 1½ hours and costs CI$36 for adults and CI$20 for children 3 to 12. Children 2 and under are free.

WINDSURFING

Avid windsurfers rate the 6.4km (4 miles) of reef-protected shallows off East End as the best location for windsurfing. Prevailing winds reach 24 to 40kmph (15–25 mph) from November through March, with 6- to 10-knot southeasterly breezes in summer months.

The best outfitter for windsurfing gear and lessons is **Cayman Windsurfing,** which operates as a subdivision of Red Sail Sports, at Morritt's Tortuga Club (✆ **345/947-7449**), in the East End of the island, an hour's drive from George Town. Open daily from 8:30am to 5pm, it charges US$45 per hour or US$120 for 3 hours for windsurfing gear. If your stamina demands 5 hours, the cost goes up to US$180. Windsurfing lesson packages are also offered, beginning at US$65 for 1 hour and going up to US$300 for 10 hours, including training classes. Snorkeling equipment can also be rented here for US$15 for 24 hours. Or you can opt for a snorkeling trip farther afield on a WaveRunner. The 30-minute excursion costs US$75 for two people, or US$95 for one person.

4 OTHER OUTDOOR PURSUITS

FISHING

Grouper and snapper are the most common catches for those who bottom-fish along the reef. Deeper waters turn up barracuda and bonito. Sport fishermen from all over the world come to the Caymans with hopes of hooking one of the big ones: tuna, wahoo, or marlin. Most hotels can make arrangements for charter boats. Otherwise, contact **Bayside Watersports** (✆ **345/949-3200;** www.baysidewatersports.com), offering deep-sea-fishing excursions in search of tuna, marlin, and wahoo on a variety of air-conditioned vessels with experienced crew. Tours depart at 7am and 1pm, and are priced according to how many people join the tour. A half-day tour for up to four people costs US$600, while a full day for the same group is US$1,000. Bonefishing and reef-fishing tours are also available at US$500 for a half-day and US$900 for a full day for four people.

GOLF

Golf courses on Grand Cayman are open daily from 8am to 6pm. Many golfers prefer to avoid the intense noonday sun.

The best course on the island is the **Britannia Golf Club** (✆ **345/745-4653**), a well-respected, open-to-the-public 9-hole course designed by Jack Nicklaus, positioned across the avenue from the Grand Cayman Beach Suites (p. 62) on West Bay Road. Greens fees are US$90 to US$100 for 9 holes, or US$140 to US$150 if you opt to play the course twice, thereby playing 18 holes. Cart rentals are included, but club rentals cost US$20 for 9 holes or US$40 for 18. Incidentally, there's a charming restaurant associated with this golf course, the **Britannia Restaurant** (✆ **345/745-4653**). Open daily for lunch and dinner, it affords a view of the lake along with stiff drinks, and excellent salads and burgers, and a theme vaguely akin to a game lodge in Kenya.

Often swept by trade winds, **North Sound Club,** Seven Mile Beach, off West Bay Road (✆ **345/945-4155;** www.northsoundclub.com), is a par-71, 6,011m (6,574-yd.) course designed by Roy Case, who factored the strong gusts into his design. The course is filled with water and sand traps, but attracts hundreds of golfers who want to face the challenge. Caser set the course into what is tantamount to a botanical garden. On-site are a clubhouse and pro shop, as well as a restaurant. Management requires that you wear collared shirts, not T-shirts. Greens fees are US$160 for 9 holes, including the cart.

The Booby, the Parrot, the Frigate Bird, et al.

About 200 species of birds make their home in the Caymans, and some 50 species are known to breed here, ranging from the famous Cayman parrots to the elegant frigate birds with their 7-foot wingspan. This magnificent bird with its forked tail has the ability to glide on its wings.

The islands are also home to the West Indian whistling duck, called the world's most endangered duck.

Sailors named a red-footed bird "booby," Spanish for "fool," because it was so easy to catch. Mostly this bird nests on Little Cayman.

You can also spot two species of woodpecker, along with tangers, ibis, mockingbirds, and several species of egrets and herons.

The Cayman parrot is, in fact, the national bird of the islands. Cayman Brac is the best island for parrot viewing, as a large reserve is protected for these colorful birds, which are mostly green with a red throat, cheeks, and neck.

On Grand Cayman, bird-watchers flock to Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park, the Meagre Bay Pond, and the Michael Gore Bird Sanctuary, among other sights, to see these birds in all their glory. The Michael Gore sanctuary lies on 3 1/2 acres of pristine wetland in the Spotts Newlands area.

A final course, the 9-hole **Blue Tip,** West Bay Road (✆ **345/815-6500**), is reserved for guests of the Ritz-Carlton, charging greens fees of US$200 per player. Designed by Greg Norman, Blue Tip also has the best pro shop on island.

HORSEBACK RIDING

Horse Back in Paradise with Nicki (✆ **345/945-5839;** www.caymanhorseriding.com) collects riders anywhere in the vicinity of Seven Mile Beach and takes them on early-morning or late-afternoon beach rides, with some inland trail riding. Nicole "Nicki" Eldemire has a wealth of information about life in Grand Cayman, and is full of anecdotes about island life, flora, and fauna. You're in the saddle for 75 minutes for US$100 per person. Sunset rides can also be arranged for a minimum of six riders.

Honey Suckle Trail Rides, Savannah (✆ **345/916-5420**), will also arrange to pick you up if you're staying in the vicinity of Seven Mile Beach. This outfitter offers morning and sunset rides lasting 1½ hours at a cost of US$60 per rider. Both Western and English tack are offered.

TENNIS

Many of the big resorts have their own tennis courts available to guests. However, a total of nine courts are available to the public at the **Cayman Islands Tennis Club,** Ann Bonney Crescent, South Sound (✆ **345/949-9464;** www.tennis.ky). The fee for up to 2 hours on either asphalt or "classic clay" surfaced courts is CI$12 per person. Hours can vary according to the season and the weather, so call ahead.

5 INDOOR ACTIVITIES FOR INCLEMENT WEATHER

If it's raining, or too hot, but you're desperate to put your body in motion, try the **World Gym,** West Bay Road (✆ **345/949-5132;** www.worldgym.com/grandcayman). You'll find it behind a branch of Wendy's on Seven Mile Beach. As the original fitness center on the island, it's still going strong with state-of-the-art equipment like Nautilus and cardiovascular machines, plus activities such as aerobics, bodybuilding, jujitsu karate, massages, weight lifting, and the like, with five personal trainers on call. A 1-day pass costs US$25. The gym is open Monday to Thursday 5am to 10pm, Friday 5am to 8pm, Saturday 8am to 6pm, and Sunday 8am to 4pm.

A competitor is **Fitness Connection,** Glen Eden Road, South Sound (✆ **345/949-8485;** www.fitness.ky), which is a full-service facility with a lot of extras—even belly dancing and tap-dancing. Regular gym workouts are offered, along with personal training and yoga. Admission is CI$30 per day for everybody (aerobics and dance classes are included in this fee), plus an additional CI$15 for use of special facilities and special programs. The complex is open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm and Saturday 9am to 1am.

6

Exploring Grand Cayman

What attractions does Grand Cayman have other than Seven Mile Beach? Admittedly, this strip of sand is its most fabled lure, but if you can tear yourself from the surf and sand, you may be pleasantly surprised by all there is to see and do. As one villa owner, who had been living in Grand Cayman for 3 years, told us, "There is more to see and more diversity here than my wife and I ever realized."

The most interesting sections of George Town can be explored on foot in an hour or so, although you could easily spend hours shopping in town. Explore the island in greater depth with a guided tour, or rent a car or scooter and set out on your own.

Most visitors drive north of George Town along West Bay Road and Seven Mile Beach, which is the most heavily developed part of Grand Cayman. Those seeking a more in-depth look at the less touristy areas can take our guided tour of the East End, going all the way from George Town to Rum Point in the north.

In the East End, you'll find such attractions as blowholes (rock formations that produce huge spouts of water when waves hit) and botanical gardens, plus remains of Grand Cayman's earliest settlements. Of course, it's always fun to break up a drive across the island with a swim in the Caymans' warm waters or a picnic on a secluded beach.

1 THE TOP FOUR ATTRACTIONS

Boatswain's Beach/Cayman Turtle Farm ★★ You won't find another green-sea-turtle farm like this anywhere else in the world. Once the islands had a multitude of turtles in the surrounding waters (which is why Columbus called the islands "Las Tortugas"), but today these creatures are sadly few in number, and the green sea turtle has been designated an endangered species (you cannot bring turtle products into the United States). The main functions of the farm are to provide the local market with edible turtle meat, thus preventing the need to hunt turtles in the wild, and to replenish the waters with hatchling and yearling turtles. Visitors today can observe about 100

Stroll Through Historic George Town

Arm yourself with a map (the tourist office will help you plot a route) and start at the Old Courts Building, now the Cayman Islands National Museum, on Harbour Drive. It has exhibits of the natural and cultural history of the island. To your left as you leave is Panton Square, with three old Cayman houses distinguished by pitched gables and ornate fretwork. On Harbour Drive, past the cruisedock, is Elmslie Memorial Church, built by Captain Rayal Bodden, a well-known shipwright. To the right, by the parking lot, are old grave markers shaped like houses, with small ones for children. In the churchyard is a War Memorial, and across the street, the Seamen's Memorial, with names of 153 Caymanians lost at sea. Next to it are the remains of Fort George, built in 1790 for defense against the Spaniards who raided the islands, carrying inhabitants captive to Cuba.

circular concrete tanks in which these sea creatures exist in every stage of development; the hope is that one day their population in the sea will regain its former status.

Turtles here range in size from 6 ounces to 600 pounds. Specific tanks give guests the opportunity to touch hatchling and baby turtles. Aside from turtles, the farm also has sharks, fish, and birds on display. You can expect to spend about an hour at touring the turtle farm. At the snack bar and restaurant, you can sample turtle dishes. There's a well-stocked gift shop on-site. Choose from two tour options: Take the "dry tour," and visit the facilities only, or take the "wet tour," which includes the opportunity to snorkel in the artificial lagoon stocked with fish. The lagoon shares a glass wall with a shark tank, allowing snorkelers to swim "with" the sharks. During Pirates Week, baby turtles are released from the farm into the open ocean. ***Note:*** Many countries ban the importation of sea-turtle products, according to the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species. More than likely, you won't be able to take home any souvenirs made out of sea turtles. For more information on the ban, see "What You Can Take Home from the Cayman Islands," in chapter 2.

825 Northwest Point Rd., West Bay. ✆ **345/949-3894.** www.boatswainsbeach.ky. Admission dry tour US$30 adults, US$20 children 4–12; wet tour US$45 adults, US$25 children 4–12; free for children 3 and under. Daily 8am–5:30pm.

Boatswain's Beach/ Cayman Turtle Farm 1
The Butterfly Farm 4
Cayman Islands National Museum 5
Dolphin Discovery Grand Cayman 3
Hell 2
Mastic Trail 7
National Gallery of the Cayman Islands 5
Pedro St. James National Historic Site 6
Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park 8
Caribbean Sea
Cayman Turtle Farm
North West Point
Hell
Conch Point
Head of Barkers
Morgan's Harbour
Stingray City
Governor's Harbour
The Links at SafeHaven
Britannia Golf Course
Seven Mile Beach
The Butterfly Farm
West Bay
North Sound
Rum Point
Cayman Kai
Booby Cay
Little Sound
Owen Roberts International Airport
Sunrise Family Golf Centre
George Town
Smith Cove
South West Point
Pull-and-be-Damned Point
South Sound
Prospect Point
Spotts Bay
Savannah
Pedro St. James National Historic Site
Bodden Town
Meagre Bay Pond
CENTRAL MANGROVE WETLAND
Bodden Bay
North Side
Old Man Bay
Malportas Pond
Mastic Trail
Old Man Bay
Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park
Frank Sound
Long Coconut Point
Colliers
Colliers Pond
East End
East Point
Gun Bay
A1
A2
A3
A4
A5
0
3 mi
0
3 km
Airport
Golf course

Cayman Islands National Museum ★ Set directly on the waterfront, in a George Town neighborhood that's more densely packed with cruise ship passengers than any other area on the island, this museum is housed in a dignified clapboard building that's one of the island's oldest and one of few to survive the disastrous hurricane of 1932. The 557-sq.-m (5,995-sq.-ft.) interior is a repository for the lore, history, and memorabilia of the Cayman Islands. Many older islanders feel that the importance of local history is being ignored by the younger generations of Caymanians. Thus, you might find more passion and ferocious national pride associated with the exhibits inside this museum than you might have expected. Exhibits focus on the sociological, archaeological, and mercantile history of the Caymans, with a heavy emphasis on the hardships suffered by the Caymanians prior to the advent of tourism and the modern-day financial-services industries. The formal exhibits feature more than 2,000 items depicting the natural, social, and cultural history of the Caymans, including an assortment of Caymanian artifacts that were collected by islander Ira Thompson beginning in the 1930s. The museum also incorporates a gift shop, theater, and cafe. Call ahead to make sure it's open when you visit. The museum can be seen in about 45 minutes.

S. Church St. (Harbour Dr.), George Town. ✆ **345/949-8368.** www.museum.ky. Admission US$5 adults, US$3 children 6–12, free for children 5 and under. Mon–Fri 9am–5pm; Sat 10am–2pm.

Dolphin Discovery Grand Cayman This dolphinarium is one of the latest attractions in Grand Cayman. It has three different programs for swimming with the dolphins. Although some surveys have revealed that dolphins may not like such intimate contact with humans, nobody talks about that around here.

The least expensive program, for ages 8 and above, is the "Dolphin Lovers Swim," during which a dolphin might sing to you, or even give you a hug and a kiss. The second program, "Dolphin Swim Adventure," allows you to go for a belly ride with this sea creature. Participants stroke and pet the dolphins.

The final and most expensive program, "Dolphin Royal Swim," allows for even more intimate contact with the dolphins. They'll not only give you a kiss and a hug, but will pull you with their dorsal tows, giving a speedy ride. After that, the dolphins will push your feet to raise you up to the water surface. Visitors to the Dolphin Discovery can spend an hour or 3 hours, depending on what they want to do.

Northwest Rd., West Bay. ✆ **866/393-5158** in the U.S., 866/793-1905 in Canada. www.dolphindiscovery.com. Reserve in advance. Dolphin Lovers' Swim US$99 adults or US$79 children 8–11; Dolphin Swim Adventure US$119 adults or US$99 children 8–11; Dolphin Royal Swim US$159 adults or US$119 children 8–11. Daily at 9am, 11am, and 1pm.

Overrated Try to Avoid Going to Hell

This is the most overblown and fundamentally most irritating attraction on Grand Cayman. Hell is a tiny village in a desolate area, lying just under a kilometer (about half a mile) from the sea. Covering about a quarter-hectare (half-acre) of jagged limestone in West Bay, near the island's most northwesterly point, Grand Cayman's earliest settlers (who wisely avoided this area) labeled this inhospitable location as "hellish"... *ergo,* Hell.

Don't even think of walking upon the terrain: First of all, it's restricted. If you defy the signs and take a walk, you have a good chance of spraining your ankles or gashing up your shins. A jagged lunar landscape of somber-toned gray rock, it evokes a treacherous coral formation—the kind that could easily tear open the hull of the sturdiest watercraft—that happens to be above the surface of the water. Except for birds, most animals tend to avoid the place.

The big "attraction" here is a little post office where you can get your cards and letters postmarked from Hell.

Pedro St. James National Historic Site ★ This is a restored great house dating from 1780, when only 400 people lived on Grand Cayman. It outlasted all the island's major hurricanes, but was destroyed by fire in 1970. It has been rebuilt and is now the centerpiece of a heritage park with a visitor center and an audio visual theater that presents laser light shows. Because of its size, the great house was called "the Castle" by generations of Caymanians. Its primary historic importance dates from December 5, 1831, when residents met here to elect the Caymans' first legislative assembly, making the house the cradle of the island's democracy. The great house sits atop a limestone bluff with a panoramic view of the sea. Guests enter via a US$1.5-million visitor center with a multimedia theater (shows are presented on the hour 10am to 4pm), a landscaped courtyard, a gift shop, and a cafe. Self-guided tours are possible. Check out the house's wide verandas, rough-hewn timber beams, gabled framework, mahogany floors and staircases, and wide-beam wooden ceilings. Guides (in 18th-century costumes, no less) are on hand to answer questions. You can spend 30 minutes or 2 hours at this historic site, depending on whether you want to see a show in the theater.

Savannah. ✆ **345/947-3329.** www.pedrostjames.ky. Admission CI$10 adults, free for children 12 and under. Daily 9am–5pm.

Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park ★★ On 24 hectares (59 acres) of rugged wooded land off Frank Sound Road, North Side, this park allows visitors to take a short walk through wetland, swamp, dry thicket, mahogany-tree stands, and patches of orchids and bromeliads. Hurricane Ivan destroyed some of the vegetation, but since then, the park has grown back. The trail is 1km (⅔ mile) long. You'll likely see chickatees, which are freshwater turtles found only on the Caymans and in Cuba. Occasionally you'll spot the rare Grand Cayman parrot, or perhaps the anole lizard, with its cobalt-blue throat pouch. Even rarer is the endangered blue iguana. The visitor center features changing exhibitions, plus a canteen for food and refreshments. It's set adjacent to the woodland trail and includes a heritage garden with a re-creation of a traditional Cayman home, garden, and farm; a floral garden with flowering plants; and a lake with three islands, home to many native birds. About 1 hour is sufficient time for visiting the botanic park.

Off Frank Sound Rd., North Side. ✆ **345/947-9462.** www.botanic-park.ky. Admission CI$8 adults, free for children 12 and under. Daily Apr–Sept 9am–6:30pm; Oct–Mar 9am–5:30pm.

2 OTHER ATTRACTIONS

The Butterfly Farm Lovers of the beautiful, elusive butterfly flock to Grand Cayman's latest attraction. Here, you can enter a mesh-enclosed area where butterflies from all over the world flutter freely.

You'll find a wealth of information on the butterfly life cycle here. We learned that females perpetuate the butterfly world, as males spend most of their lives getting drunk on rotten fruit. The males flit about showing off their vivid, beautiful wings, trying to attract the females (who are usually drably colored in comparison).

The farm also features several species of moths, including the Atlas moth, the largest moth in the world. With a typical wingspan of 36cm (14 in.), it's the size of a small bird.

Guided tours take you through the farm where the staff will answer all your questions about butterflies. Expect to spend about 45 minutes at this attraction.

Lawrence Blvd. off West Bay Rd. (opposite the cinema). ✆ **345/946-3411.** www.thebutterflyfarm.com. Admission CI$12 adults, CI$7 children 3–12, free for children 2 and under. Daily 8:30am–4pm (last tour 3:30pm).

Mastic Trail ★ (Finds) The trail is a restored 200-year-old footpath through a 2-million-year-old woodland area in the heart of the island. Lying west of Frank Sound Road, about a 45-minute drive from the

The National Flower & the National Tree

The Caymans are home to almost 30 indigenous orchid species, but islanders selected the wild banana orchid as their national flower. In different varieties, it blooms on all three islands in April and May, and is spectacular to behold.

The wild banana orchid on Grand Cayman has white blossoms and purple lips, whereas those on Little Cayman and Cayman Brac are yellow in color.

The national tree, the silver thatch palm, has even figured into the economy of the islands. The underside of the palm is silvery, with a lightish green upper frond. Locals call it "the money tree."

Islanders would go into the interior and crop the leaves from the top of the tree. In turn, they would trade them for goods at the local shops. Merchants then would exchange them for goods imported from Jamaica. Caymanians also used the silver thatch palm for roofing, belts, rope, and baskets.

heart of George Town, the trail showcases the Mastic Reserve's natural attractions, including a native mangrove swamp, traditional agriculture, and an ancient woodland area, home to the largest variety of native plant and animal life in the Cayman Islands.

The trail is supervised and maintained in safe and unobstructed repair by a government-appointed field agent, but during periods of heavy rain, the southern end is likely to be flooded. The government therefore recommends that during periods of prolonged rainfall, hikers approach the trail from the northern end, off Further Road, North Side, as opposed to via the southern end, off Frank Sound Road.

Guided tours of the trail, organized by the Cayman Islands National Trust, are scheduled every Wednesday at 9am, and every fourth Saturday, also at 9am. Tours last 2 to 3 hours each, and are limited to a maximum of 15 participants. Reservations are strongly recommended, and the cost is US$25 per person. The hike is not recommended for children 5 or under, the elderly, or persons with physical disabilities. The trail is flat, and gravelly or sandy. If you're in relatively good shape, you should not find it particularly challenging. Be sure to wear comfortable and sturdy shoes and carry water and insect repellent. For tour reservations, call **The National Trust**

(✆ **345/949-0121;** www.nationaltrust.org.ky). If the schedule for these organized tours isn't convenient, you can stop into the headquarters of the National Trust on South Church Street, Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm, for a self-guided walking tour/map of the trail. The map describes the botanical and geological features you're likely to see en route, and costs CI$5.

National Gallery of the Cayman Islands This gallery is the Cayman Islands' only noncommercial venue for the exhibition of art. The compact museum mounts about six fine-art exhibitions per year, each containing about 60 works. About 30% of the art is by local artists.

Harbour Place, S. Church St., George Town. ✆ **345/945-8111.** www.nationalgallery.org.ky. Free, though donations are welcome. Mon–Fri 9am–5pm; Sat 11am–4pm.

DRIVING TOUR 1 GEORGE TOWN TO RUM POINT

START:	**George Town.**
FINISH:	**Rum Point.**
TIME:	**2 to 2½ hours.**
BEST TIME:	**Daylight hours from 9am to 5pm.**
WORST TIME:	**When rains have been, or are, heavy.**

Leaving George Town heading along the coast, on South Church Street (A5), you will follow this route until you see Grand Old House (p. 86), a landmark and one of Grand Cayman's leading restaurants. To begin your tour swimmingly, and to take in a scenic view, stop off at Smith Cove, signposted directly south of Grand Old House.

❶ Smith Cove

This is one of the best spots for snorkeling among rainbow-hued fish and for swimming in calm waters. Local weddings on the beach often take place here. On one occasion, we saw a couple getting married in their bathing suits. The beach is a bit rock-strewn. There is a parking lot and bathrooms on-site.

After a stopover, continue south along South Church Street as it becomes South Sound Road (still the A5). This road runs along the south coast of Grand Cayman and is perhaps the most scenic on the island. Eventually at Red Bay, the A5 merges into the A2, also called Red Bay Road. Follow it directly east into the:

❷ Village of Prospect

You are now passing through what is thought to be the site of the first settlement on Grand Cayman, although there is little to see today.

1 Smith Cove
2 Village of Prospect
3 Village of Spotts
4 Governor Michael Gore Bird Sanctuary
5 Village of Savannah
6 Pedro St. James
7 Bodden Town
8 Meagre Bay Pond
9 Village of Breakers
10 Frank Sound
11 The Mastic Trail
12 Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park
13 Hutland
14 Rum Point
Airport
Golf course
"Take a Break" stop
0 3 mi
0 3 km
start here
finish here
George Town
Bodden Town
Savannah
Rum Point
Cayman Kai
North Side
Old Man Bay
Old Man Bay
Mastic Trail
CENTRAL MANGROVE WETLAND
Little Sound
Booby Cay
Meagre Bay Pond
Frank Sound
Colliers
Colliers Pond
Gun Bay
East End
East Point
Long Coconut Point
Mahoe Pond
Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park
Sunrise Family Golf Centre
Pedro St. James National Historic Site
Bodden Bay
Spotts Bay
Prospect Point
South Sound
Owen Roberts International Airport
Britannia Golf Course
The Links at SafeHaven
Governor's Harbour
Morgan's Harbour
Head of Barkers
Stingray City
North Sound
Caribbean Sea
Seven Mile Beach
West Bay
Conch Point
Hell
Cayman Turtle Farm
North West Point
Smith Cove
South West Point
Pull-and-be-Damned Point
A1
A2
A3
A4
A5

Settlers established a fort and an outpost here sometime in the latter half of the 1700s—"ancient history" in Caymanian terms. You can see a little monument marking the site of Prospect Fort, the oldest fort on the island. The village, which lies to the immediate east of Red Bay Road along Prospect Point Road, has been mostly abandoned since 1932. The village's church, opening onto the coast, was left to decay. Nearby, the Watler Family Cemetery dates from the 1800s and is under the protection of the National Trust. The cemetery is open to the public and you can still see the gravestones—some curiously shaped like small homes. Caymanians called these family plots "Gardens of Memories." Of interest to most visitors is the good sandy beach lying just around the point at Prospect. Both divers and snorkelers are drawn to the beach and sea here. Beach shelters and public toilets are available.

Red Bay Road turns into Jack Road at the Village of Prospect. As you continue east along Jack Road (A2), you'll pass through the:

❸ Village of Spotts

Like Prospect, Spotts is a historic village. It is currently a private residential area, although the government has plans to turn the coast into a public seaside park and to develop the area as a cruise ship docking space should the waters at George Town be too rough for smooth landings. A sandy public beach is nestled between the rocks and is good for swimming. You can also visit an old cemetery, with 18th-century grave markers painted white.

From Spotts, you can take a short detour to the north along Governor Spotts Newlands Road to reach the:

❹ Gov. Michael Gore Bird Sanctuary

This bird sanctuary is open all day and is particularly interesting to visit from April to June, when it is at its most beautiful and shelters the most birds. At various times of the year, more than 60 species—both land and water birds—inhabit the sanctuary. It is a birder's delight. At least a quarter of the native birds of the Caymans can be seen here, and many of them use the freshwater pool at the center of the .8-hectare (2-acre) refuge. Birds can be viewed from an observation platform and from the walkways that lace the sanctuary. Admission is free.

Double back to the main road (A2) and continue east to the:

❺ Village of Savannah

This village contains a 1940s schoolhouse that was restored by the National Trust. It's open to the public only by reservation, so call ✆ **345/949-0121** if you're interested. Frankly, we don't think it's

worth the bother. We recommend you pass through the village, as there is little of interest here. After you've left town, a crossroads to the left, called Hirst Road, takes you to the Sunrise Family Golf Centre, a 9-hole, par-3 course that's open to the public.

At the golf course, turn right onto Pedro Castle Road, which leads to the historic 18th-century plantation great house:

6 Pedro St. James

This national historic site is one of the major attractions of Grand Cayman. For complete details, see p. 123. You can either visit Pedro St. James now or return at some point later if you don't want to stop during your driving tour.

Back on the main road, A2 continues east and is named Poinciana Road before becoming Shamrock Drive. Shamrock Drive leads to:

7 Bodden Town

This is more of a village than a town, where single-story homes with corrugated-iron roofs and wooden verandas evoke British colonial architecture. Once called "South Side," Bodden Town was the first capital of Grand Cayman. "Respectable settlers" (or so the history books tell us) made the town their home back in the 1700s. Over time, Bodden Town's power and prestige were transferred to George Town in the west.

Because it doesn't have the commercial interest of George Town or the tourist frenzy of Seven Mile Beach, Bodden Town still retains some of its traditional aura.

Bodden Town is named for Gov. William Bodden, who was chief magistrate (which is virtually the same as a governor) of the island from 1776 to 1823. Because he did much to improve the life of the islanders, Governor Bodden is known today as "the Grand Old Man of Grand Cayman."

You can visit Guard House Park, opposite Manse Road, where an old guardhouse once stood. The guardhouse protected the western approach to town, with its cannons pointed down a rocky gorge toward the sea. The two cannons that stand here today are from the ships involved in Cayman's most famous disaster, the **Wreck of the 10 Sails** (p. 108). In a patriotic gesture, the Caymanians sent their antique cannons to England in the darkest days of World War II to be melted down and rebuilt into modern weapons.

Another small battery of cannons once stood on Gun Square, Bodden Town's second defense point, guarding the eastern approach to the town. Two of the original cannons are still in place. Behind Gun Square is Mission House. Its first floor was constructed in the 1840s, making it one of the oldest buildings in the Caymans.

Leaving Bodden, drive along A2 1.6km (1 mile) east to:

❽ Meagre Bay Pond

This small wildlife sanctuary was once frequented by hunters seeking mallard and teal ducks. Today, the government protects the area. The freshwater pond dries out in the winter months and fills up again in the summer. Early morning or late afternoon is the best time to view this waterfowl breeding area, with its various flocks of shore birds and migratory wading birds, including willets, stilts, ibis, herons, grebes, egrets, and cormorants. Though the government owns this mangrove-fringed lagoon, the land around it is private; no public footpath leads to the sanctuary. You'll have to park off the side of the road and watch the birds from a distance.

Continue following the same road to the east. The road now changes its designation from A2 to A3. Follow A3 east to the:

❾ Village of Breakers

The village of Breakers would hardly merit your attention were it not for The Lighthouse Restaurant at Breakers (see below and p. 88).

TAKE A BREAK

The Lighthouse Restaurant at Breakers (✆ **345/947-2047;** www.lighthouse.ky) is the ideal luncheon spot for those traveling the southern coast. Its combination of Caribbean and Italian food, with an emphasis on the catch of the day, is delicious. The lighthouse was purposely built as a restaurant, with a terrace opening onto views of the sea.

From here, continue east on A3, which winds its way to the beautiful:

❿ Frank Sound

The sound can be seen to your right as you drive. You might want to stop off and go for a swim along the narrow sands that are idyllic for beachcombing, swimming, or even bonefishing. Part of the beach is set against a backdrop of Australian pines. A boat-launch ramp leads into the shallow and calm waters, which are protected by a reef.

Near the boat ramp, a road turns north, cutting down considerably on the driving time. This road, Frank Sound Drive, takes you to two of the major attractions of Grand Cayman: the Mastic Trail and Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park, both reviewed earlier in this chapter.

It's also possible to continue to the East End following A3 all around the coast. This is an interesting drive, although it's devoid of specific attractions, except for the **blowholes** near the hamlet of High Rock, where onshore sprays of water shoot up like geysers, creating a roar like a lion.

If you want to stick to the main tour, take Frank Sound Drive immediately north until you come to:

⓫ The Mastic Trail

These 400 hectares (988 acres) and their beautiful walking trail are adventures unto themselves (p. 124). If you want to finish the driving tour and get back to George Town in the late afternoon, you might skip the Mastic Trail for the moment and continue on your way. If you have time to negotiate the trail, you can find it just off Mastic Road, which is located to the left of Frank Sound Drive near the little fire station.

After leaving the entrance to the trail, you can continue north on Frank Sound Drive for 2.6km (1⅔ miles) to the entrance of:

⓬ Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park

Named in honor of Her Majesty, this park and botanical garden is fully described on p. 124. If you're pressed for time and want to complete the driving tour, you may want to plan a leisurely visit to the park for another day.

After passing the entrance to the park, Frank Sound Drive continues north to the northern coast. Turn left on A4. With the sea on your right and the marshy interior on your left, you can drive along to the west, enjoying the fresh air and the scenery. A4 at this point is also known as Ralph Drive.

⓭ Hutland

This community takes its name from the huts that were constructed in the area by early British settlers who farmed the land. This is one of the last havens for the endangered whistling duck, the only duck that breeds in the Caymans. Count yourself lucky, though, if you see one.

From Hutland, A4 runs all the way west to:

⓮ Rum Point

This area has a good beach and is a fine place to end your island tour. Rum Point got its name from the barrels of rum that once washed ashore here after a shipwreck. Today, it is dreamy and quaint, surrounded by towering casuarina trees blowing in the trade winds. Most of these trees have hammocks suspended from their trunks. Hop into one and leisurely enjoy the surroundings. Featuring cays, reefs, mangroves, and shallows, Rum Point is a refuge that extends west and south for 11km (7 miles). It divides the two "arms" of Grand Cayman. The sound's many spits of land and its plentiful lagoons are ideal for snorkeling, swimming, wading, and birding. If you get hungry, drop in to the **Wreck Bar & Grill,** Rum Point (p. 152; ✆ **345/947-9412**), for a juicy burger.

After visiting Rum Point, you can head back to George Town by backtracking on the route that got you here.

START:	**George Town.**
FINISH:	**Batabano.**
TIME:	**A half-hour.**
BEST TIME:	**Daily between 10am and 4pm (traffic is less heavy during those hours).**
WORST TIME:	**When many cruise ships are docked (Seven Mile Beach roads are the most crowded at this time). You can ask when cruise ships are coming in at the tourist bureau.**

This second driving tour is shorter than the previous one and takes you north of George Town to West Bay, one of the oldest and most colorful districts in the Caymans, inhabited for 2 centuries.

From the center of George Town, follow North Church Street north to the intersection with A1 coming up from the south. Hug left and continue on West Bay Road north, which will take you along:

❶ Seven Mile Beach

This is the beach that put Grand Cayman on the tourist maps of the world. True, it doesn't really stretch for 7 miles (11km). Most locals claim it's only 5½ miles (8.9km) long, but that's still a whole lot of beach.

More than likely, at least part of your Grand Cayman vacation will be spent swimming and sunning here, and enjoying the many fine restaurants that line the beach. The southern part of the sandy stretch is heavily developed, saturated with condos, villas, restaurants, hotels, apartment buildings, a number of shopping centers, and fast-food joints.

This is the most congested part of Grand Cayman and the speed limit here is only 40kmph (25 mph). Joggers, motorists, cyclists, and just plain walkers clog the streets throughout the day and for most of the evening.

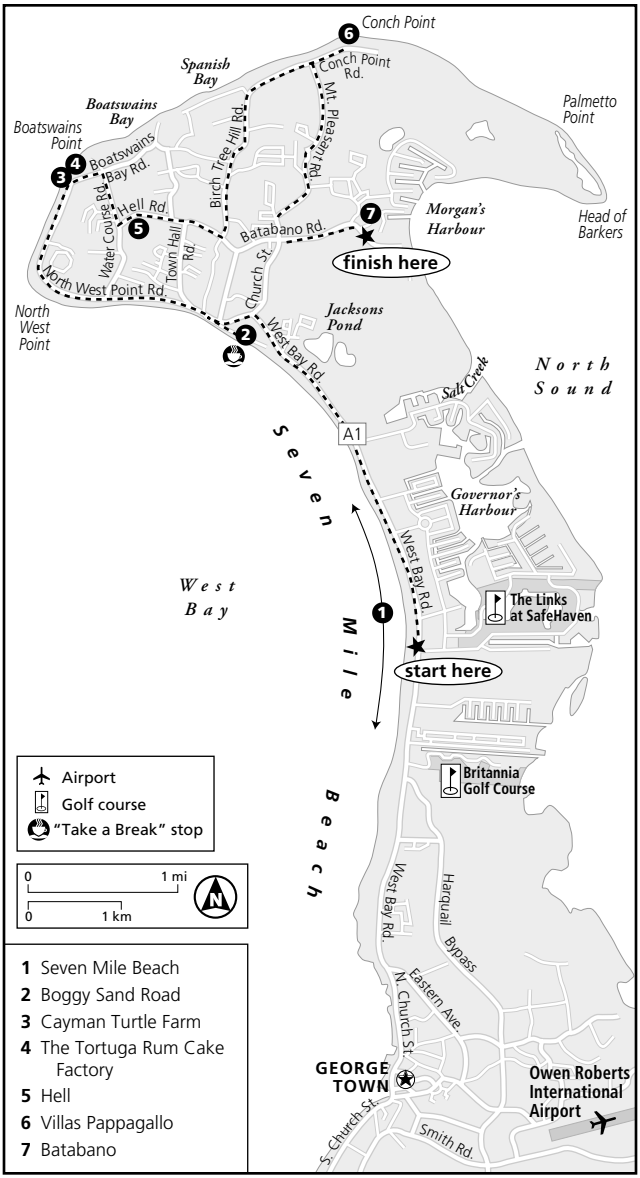
No specific attractions are along the beach itself, so you can continue your drive without stopovers.

West Bay Road (also called A1) eventually leads to North West Point Road. With Jackson's Pond on your right, you'll approach Cemetery Road and a fire station. At this junction, turn left along:

❷ Boggy Sand Road

This scenic coastal road contains some of the most traditional historic Cayman houses and churches. Many visitors miss it if they drive on the main road, but this route is well worth exploring.

Vibrant tropical plants surround many of the old gingerbread-style fisherman's cottages, which date from the first 2 decades of the 20th


Conch Point
Spanish Bay
Conch Point Rd.
Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Boatswains Bay
Palmetto Point
Boatswains Point
Boatswains Bay Rd.
Birch Tree Hill Rd.
Water Course Rd.
Hell Rd.
Batabano Rd.
Morgan's Harbour
Head of Barkers
finish here
Town Hall Rd.
Church St.
North West Point Rd.
North West Point
Jacksons Pond
West Bay Rd.
Salt Creek
North Sound
A1
Seven Mile Beach
Governor's Harbour
West Bay
The Links at SafeHaven
start here
Airport
Golf course
"Take a Break" stop
Britannia Golf Course
0 1 mi
0 1 km
West Bay Rd.
Harquail Bypass
Eastern Ave.
N. Church St.
GEORGE TOWN
Owen Roberts International Airport
S. Church St.
Smith Rd.
1 Seven Mile Beach
2 Boggy Sand Road
3 Cayman Turtle Farm
4 The Tortuga Rum Cake Factory
5 Hell
6 Villas Pappagallo
7 Batabano

 century. You can stop at Grandma Julia's Beach if you'd like to go for a swim. The beach is raked by hand every morning.

At the end of Boggy Sand Road, you will connect once more to West Bay Road, which you can continue to follow by heading west and then north, bypassing such geographic landmarks as Dolphin Point and North West Point. North West Point Road will lead you by the:

❸ Cayman Turtle Farm

This is one of the major sights on Grand Cayman. Established in 1968, it's the world's only commercial green-sea-turtle farm, where you can observe turtles in all stages of development. See p. 119 for more details.

Right next door to the turtle farm is:

❹ The Tortuga Rum Cake Factory

Many of the rum cakes that visitors purchase as souvenirs in George Town stores are made on-site at this large bakery. You can watch the process of making rum cake through glass windows and sample some of the various flavors of rum before making your purchase. The factory charges no admission and receives guests Monday to Friday from 8am to 5pm, and Saturday from 8am to 2:30pm.

If you'd like to stop for lunch nearby, drop in at **Cracked Conch,** West Bay Road (✆ **345/945-5217**), near the turtle farm. For a complete review of the restaurant, see p. 84.

After leaving the Factory or the Cracked Conch, follow North West Point Road to the junction with Water Course Road, and head south. At the junction with Hell Road, continue east on Hell Road to:

❺ Hell

Did we already mention that this is the most overrated tourist trap in the Cayman Islands? Hell is said to be the setting for a few scenes in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* but some biographers dispute this claim. It's a rugged outcrop of iron shore with a bleak lunar landscape that does indeed look like the charred remains of hellfire. Granted, the landscape is completely unique. Grab some souvenirs if you must, and then press on to the greater charms planned below.

Leave Hell by traveling east along Reverend Blackman Road until you reach the junction with Birch Tree Hill Road. Take Birch Tree Hill Road north until you reach the northern coastline at Spanish Bay. Continue east along this road (whose name changes from Birch Tree Hill Rd. to Conch Point Rd.), bypassing Spanish Bay Reef Hotel. At the end of the road you come to:

❻ Villas Pappagallo

Here, you'll find a complex of private villas and Ristorante Pappagallo (p. 92), a good choice for dinner, but closed at lunch. You can get out of your car and head toward Barkers, the site of a 5.6-hectare (14-acre) bird sanctuary over which the restaurant looks out. This tidal

lagoon is home to numer ous migrant bir ds, including ducks and white egrets. You'll see more birds in winter than in summer.

For your final look at West Bay, double back along Conch Point Road, heading west. When you reach the junction with Mount Pleasant Road, take Mount Pleasant Road south to the junction with Batabano Road. Turn left on Batabano Road and take it east to the settlement at:

❼ Batabano

At Morgan's Harbour Marina, on the North Sound in the little backwater of B atabano, fishermen tie up their catch of the day , much to the delight of photographers. You can often buy fr esh lobster, fish, and conch here. A large barrier reef protects the sound on three sides, and is a mecca for diving and spor t fishing.

To head back to George Town or Seven Mile Beach, drive west along Batabano Road until you come to the junction with Willie Farrington Drive. Take this drive south to the junction with North West Point Road and turn onto North West Point Road. This road will carry you south along Seven Mile Beach and eventually back into George Town.

3 ORGANIZED TOURS

Since getting around Grand Cayman can be difficult, even if you have a car, many visitors opt for an organiz ed tour. These tours ar e especially helpful if you want to see mor e than just the standar d sights.

Many visitors prefer a private taxi tour that includes such destinations as the tur tle farm or botanical gar dens. One to four people can create their o wn tour at a cost of CI$40 for one to thr ee persons or CI$52 for four passengers. Call **Cayman Cab Team** at ✆ **345/926-8294** or **Holiday Taxi** at ✆ **345/945-4491.**

Reality T ours (✆ **345/947-7200;** www .realitytours.ky) offers half-day tours of West Bay. Reality Tours also goes to the East E nd, visiting Pedro St. James, and the blowholes. Tours in the east include either Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park or Rum Point, with lunch at Champion House II Restaurant (lunch price not included). Tours of the whole island include the East Bay and West Bay attractions mentioned abo ve. H alf-day tours of the w est cost CI$37 for adults or CI$25 for childr en 12 and under . Half-day tours of the east go for CI$47 for adults or CI$32 for children 12 and under. A full-day tour of the whole island is CI$79 for adults or CI$55 for childr en 12 and under. All these tours ar e free for children 3 and under.

Tropicana Tours (✆ **345/949-0944;** www.tropicana-tours.com) is the original tour operator on G rand Cayman. Its best offering is a 6½-hour sightseeing tour of the island, which costs US$75 for adults and US$53 for kids 12 and under . On this tour, you'll visit G eorge Town, points along Seven Mile Beach, Pedro St. James, the East End,

The Pirates of the Caribbean

Have you heard of the Teach the Rover
And his knavery on the Main,
How of gold he was a lover,
How he loved all ill-got gain?

Arguably, the most notorious temporary resident of Grand Cayman was the notorious Edward Teach, more famously known as "Blackbeard" (1680–1718). The archetypal icon of all Caribbean pirates, he sailed his vessel, *Queen Anne's Revenge,* to loot and plunder.

He wore a big feathered tricorn and carried multiple pistols, knives, and swords. To intimidate his enemies, he placed lit matches into his enormous black beard. His beard was twisted into Rastafarian-style locks. He was said to have had 14 so-called wives, and he often buried his treasure. He would take a lone sailor with him on a small boat and return alone. The sailor's corpse was placed atop the chest of gold to discourage excavation.

Legend has it that Blackbeard on Grand Cayman shot and lamed Israel Hands in a gesture to show how fierce he could be if opposed. Crippled for life, Hands was immortalized as the blind Pew in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island.*

Blackbeard came to a bloody end in a duel off the Carolina coast. He was said to have suffered 25 wounds, five of them by gunshot, before finally collapsing and dying. Blackbeard's ghastly head ended up dangling from the bowsprit end of the conquering ship captained by Lt. Robert Maynard.

The death of this pirate more or less ended piracy along the American coast.

and the blowholes. If you'd like to spend less time touring, a 2½-hour sightseeing tour of the island's highlights, including the Cayman Turtle Farm and George Town, costs US$31 for adults and US$22 for children 12 and under.

Janet and Geddes Hislop are the chief promoters of eco-tourism on the island, operating **Silver Thatch Excursions** (✆ **345/945-6588;** www.earthfoot.org). They provide the best tours of Mastic Trail, costing around US$50 per person. Early-morning bird-watching trips can also be arranged.

7

Shopping on Grand Cayman

Shopping on the Cayman Islands has drastically improved because of all the new business generated by cruise ship arrivals. Although the Cayman Islands are definitely not a shopping destination in the league of St. Thomas and St. Maarten, the Caymans do offer a vast array of merchandise, most of it imported. Because there's no sales tax, you'll find duty-free shopping galore, ranging from jewelry and toys to coral and rum cakes.

1 THE SHOPPING SCENE

You can get good deals here on island-made art, crafts, and other products. Many local souvenirs tend to be a bit cheesy, but some handicrafts—such as those made of various types of coral—are artistic statements in their own right and have more lasting value. Jewelry fashioned from caymanite, a hard, marble-like stone harvested in the cliffs of Cayman Brac, is especially popular. In recent years, local art has made greater and greater strides, finding a ready market among the constantly arriving cruise ship passengers and expat villa owners who want to brighten up their surroundings.

Many products, including jewelry, are fashioned from black coral. Eco-sensitive visitors urge other travelers not to purchase these products. Much of the black coral comes from Central American countries such as Honduras and Belize. The Cayman Islands themselves have strong marine laws to protect their reefs, but countries to the south often do not, and the coral reefs can be seriously harmed or damaged when harvested. Since black coral is known to grow at a rate of 7.6cm (3 in.) every decade, it qualifies as an endangered species.

Because the Cayman Islands are under the rule of Great Britain, you can sometimes get good deals on British imports. You'll find an array of top-quality jewelry, some of it equal to jewelry in the stores of London, Paris, and New York.

Grand Cayman, especially around George Town, abounds with imported luxury items. For example, you might find French and American perfumes; Spanish, French, and Swedish crystal; Swiss watches; premium liquor; Japanese cameras; and English china.

However, the prices for some of these items are often on par with what you might find in your hometown. Know the average cost of a desired item before you head to the Caymans, so you'll easily know whether or not you're getting a bargain. Some of the best deals we've discovered have been on native crafts, watches, jewelry, rum, designer sunglasses and clothing, art, cameras, crystal, and cosmetics. Cuban products such as cigars are sold, but you can't bring them back into the United States. The carefully packaged Cayman rum cake is the most popular purchase.

Each U.S. citizen (including children) can return with up to US$1,000 worth of goods duty-free. Since the amounts are collective, a family of three has a duty-free allowance of US$3,000. No duty is imposed on handicrafts, art, food (including those famous Cayman rum cakes), or books.

Make sure you know which dollar a merchant is quoting in before you step up to the cashier. The U.S. dollar is valued approximately 20% less than the Caymanian dollar.

There is no local sales tax in the Cayman Islands.

Most stores keep regular business hours of Monday to Saturday 9am to 5 or 6pm.

2 SHOPPING: A TO Z

ART GALLERIES

Art is very important on the Cayman Islands and local talent is abundant. As you visit the island's galleries, you might want to remember the names of painters (described below) who define the Cayman Islands as their home and, often, as the source of their inspiration.

Canadian-born, silver-haired, and elegant, **Joanne Sibley** lived for 25 years in Jamaica, and has dwelled for the same length of time on Grand Cayman. She's noted for her luminous portrayals of light on West Indian landscapes, creating canvases that seem to glow. Although her works are for sale at some galleries, she welcomes interested visitors into her studio for private showings if they phone in advance. Contact her at ✆ **345/947-7273** before heading out to see her at 1342 Bodden Town Rd., 3.2km (2 miles) east of Bodden Town, 21km (13 miles) east of George Town.

Charles Long is another well-known Caymanian painter, celebrated for his use of solid, bright colors in paintings that often depict Cayman flora and fauna. He is happy to give tours of his studio to art lovers who call in advance. Contact him at ✆ **345/917-5741.** His home is at 114 West Lane, off Pedro Castle Road, in the hamlet of Savannah, about a 15-minute drive southeast of George Town.

Finds Caymanian Artist Miss Lassie

No retrospective of Caymanian art would be complete without the artfully naive paintings of **Gladwyn Bush,** known to most of Grand Cayman by her affectionate nickname, **Miss Lassie.** Born on Grand Cayman in 1914, she left the Cayman Islands only once in her life: to attend an exhibition of her works in Curaçao. Displayed in galleries as far away as Baltimore and Paris, her paintings depict, among other subjects, God talking with Elijah and Nicodemus chatting with Jesus. She once described her paintings as visions that came to her "in the state between sleeping and awakening." She died in 2003, at age 89, and since then her works have become increasingly difficult to find in the public domain. Count yourself lucky if you see her work on display in a local gallery, but don't count on buying one. Miss Lassie's paintings would sell for upward of CI$8,000—when she was alive.

Kennedy Gallery ★ This art gallery—the most important, visible, and influential in the Cayman Islands—showcases works by each of the nation's recognized artists, including local masters Joanne Sibley and Charles Long. Works by less widely recognized artists are also featured. Our favorite among these lesser-known artists is Petrina Wright, who once taught art in a high school on Cayman Brac, and whose works seem to incorporate reggae, soca, Caymanian nationalism, racial pride, sexual liberation, and adolescent trauma, all at the same time. In the artwork here, expect to find an excellent selection of seascapes and tropical landscapes, bronze castings of Caymanian sea turtles by artists in California, and absolutely brilliant sculptures by emerging artists in nearby Cuba. Works of art range from CI$8 to CI$50,000. Members of the Hill family, who are extremely articulate spokespersons for the art scene on Grand Cayman, manage this fine gallery. West Shore Center, West Bay Rd., Seven Mile Beach. ✆ **345/949-8077.** www.kennedystudios.net.

BEACHWEAR

Brazilian Point Indulge fashion-plate tendencies at this stylish and whimsical shop where all the garments (for women only) are imported from Brazil. Each "minimalist" item here evokes a beachfront venue in Bahia. Bikinis average around CI$35. There's also an inventory of belts, bags, shoes, and flesh-revealing "flirtware." In the Queen's Court Shopping Center, West Bay Rd., Seven Mile Beach. ✆ **345/945-5679.**

Latitude 19 Set close to the cruise ship piers in downtown George Town, this shop sells everything you'll need for a sun-flooded day on the beach. All kinds of beachwear, including sunglasses, beach batiks, straw hats, sandals, sunblock, and suntan lotion are for sale. There's also a collection of undergarments with "Cayman Islands" emblazoned on the seat. N. Church St., George Town. ✆ **345/946-6178.**

BOOKS

The Book Nook Here, at one of the largest bookstores on Grand Cayman, you'll find novels, travel guides, cookbooks, diet books, and dictionaries. You can also peruse the rambling, somewhat disorganized inventory of souvenirs, children's toys, porcelain, and gift items. A smaller branch of this outfit is in the Anchorage Shopping Centre, on Harbour Drive, directly opposite the cruise ship terminal (✆ **345/949-7392**). In the Galleria Plaza Shopping Centre, West Bay Rd., Seven Mile Beach. ✆ **345/945-4686.**

CAMERAS

Cayman Camera Ltd. This top outlet for all of your photographic needs is also the best shop at which to purchase duty-free cameras and binoculars. In addition to its regular cameras, compacts, and SLRs, the store also sells video cameras and offers 1-hour processing. It can also make prints and enlargements from negatives, slides, prints, and digital sources, and it is the local distributor for Fuji and Hasselblad. 31 S. Church St., George Town. ✆ **345/949-8359.** www.caymancamera.com.

CUBAN PRODUCTS

La Casa del Habano Tucked into an inner courtyard and accessible via a narrow alleyway from the busy sidewalk outside, this is a small-scale but charming emporium of Cuban cigars, Cuban coffees, and Cuban art objects. In the Cayside Building, Shedden Rd., at the corner of N. Church St., George Town. ✆ **345/946-4666.**

Tips Lighting Up a Stogie for the Castro Brothers

Although you can buy Cuban cigars in the Cayman Islands, it is still illegal to bring them back to the United States. If you want to enjoy one of these prized stogies, you'll have to smoke it on the islands.

DIVING/SNORKELING GEAR

Divers World/Aqua-Fit/The Beach Boutique If you're even remotely interested in under- or above-watersports, this trio of shops—each owned by the same entrepreneur and within the same shopping center—has virtually everything you'd need to play on or below the surface of the sea. The largest and most impressive of the stores is **Divers World Ltd. of Cayman** (✆ **345/949-8128;** www.scubish.com), which has probably the Caribbean's largest collection of diving and snorkeling equipment. Expect an impressive inventory of underwater digital cameras, film, watches, scuba-tank regulators, swim masks and fins, wetsuits, weight belts, lighting devices, and scooters that propel scuba enthusiasts either above or beneath the surface of the water. If you're in the market for sports clothes, bathing suits, gift items, protective wading shoes, sunglasses, suntan oil, candles shaped like shells, or rash guards (a Lycra or latex shirt that protects you from being stung or scraped by a coral reef), head for **The Beach Boutique** (✆ **345/949-8128**), immediately next door. In the Seven Mile Shopping Centre (The Yellow Plaza), West Bay Rd., George Town.

FASHION

Arabus Clothiers ★ Some of the mostly European clothing here costs less than the equivalent within the U.S., partly because of the duty-free status of natural fibers such as cashmere, silk, linen, and wool in the Cayman Islands. You may find some flamboyant items, such as slinky, scarlet women's evening dresses, complementing merchandise that is for the most part restrained, subdued, and in very good taste. 8 Fort St., George Town. ✆ **345/949-4620.**

FOOD

Foster's Food Fair If you're renting a private condo or villa and want to do light cooking "at home," Foster's is the best pit stop. Just off Seven Mile Beach, it's a huge emporium of food products. This is the most visible of five branches scattered widely across Grand Cayman Island. Since nearly everything has to be imported, food is much more expensive in the Caymans than it is likely to be in your hometown. Expect to be shocked by the bill. Strand Shopping Centre, West Bay Rd., George Town. ✆ **345/945-4748.** www.fosters-iga.com.

GIFTS & SOUVENIRS

Also see the "Handicrafts" and "Jewelry" sections below for other great gift and souvenir ideas.

Beyond the Horizon This emporium—loaded with good Asian handicrafts—is one of the most exotic gift shops on Grand Cayman. Tara Parker operates the store and travels twice a year to Indonesia, India, and Southeast Asia to find the tables, armoires, Indian temple drawings, jewelry, and textiles that transform her shop into something akin to a bazaar. Expect depictions of Buddha and the Hindu gods, wrought iron in a style known throughout India as the *jali* school, and furniture carved from Asian hardwoods. In the Galleria Plaza Shopping Centre, West Bay Rd., Seven Mile Beach. ✆ **345/946-1498.** www.bthcayman.com.

Harley Davidson of Grand Cayman At this official outlet of the motorcycle and lifestyle purveyor, expect commemorative T-shirts, gift items, and the kind of clothing that can protect you from windburn during your real or imagined roadfest with the Hell's Angels. In the words of the staff, they sell "the yada yada" (souvenirs), but no actual motorcycles. In the Aquaworld Mall, N. Church St., George Town. ✆ **345/949-4464.** www.harley-davidson.com.

Pure Art This is the most creative and most imaginative gift shop in the Cayman Islands. Located within an unpretentious and low-slung wood-frame house about a mile south of George Town proper, it has reached its present level of fascination under the stewardship of Debbie Chase, a U.S.-born artist. She has friendly relations with craftspeople throughout the Cayman Islands, which has resulted in a treasure trove of gift items that are a lot more interesting than what's available at many nearby competitors. Expect a densely packed environment loaded with paintings, artifacts, books, and clever handcrafted items from the Caymans, Cuba, Jamaica, Key West, and Central America. The common denominator linking all the items is good taste, good humor, and an appreciation for detail-intensive labor. The collection of island-inspired jewelry is particularly comprehensive. 5 S. Church St. at Denham-Thompson Way, George Town. ✆ **345/949-9133.** www.pureart.ky.

Shellections Few other shops on Grand Cayman sell seashells in such an imaginative way. Look for boxes covered with seashells, delicate shells accented with gold trim, and—best of all—some of the most artful Christmas decorations we've ever seen, including angels, cherubs, and infants in swaddling clothes, all of them crafted from fish bone, shells, gauze, shiny gilt ribbons, and gilt paint. You'll also find T-shirts, black coral jewelry, and blown-glass paperweights. This is the largest of three branches of this store. The other two are found at the Waterfront Center and across from the Bayshore Mall. Harbour St. at the corner of Shedden Rd., George Town. ✆ **345/946-4590.**

HANDICRAFTS

Also see "Beyond the Horizon," "Pure Art," and "Shellections" under "Gifts & Souvenirs," above; and "Mitzi's Fine Jewelry" under "Jewelry," below, for more handicrafts.

Guy Harvey's Gallery & Shoppe ★★ For the serious shopper, this is one of the best bets in George Town. Guy, of course, is one of the world's most celebrated biologists, plus a fish and marine conservationist. He is also a marine-animal artist, and his best works are on sale here. This outlet contains the biggest array of Guy's merchandise ever assembled under one roof. You can purchase original art or limited edition prints, as well as nautical clothing for both men and women and the usual T-shirts, gifts, and souvenirs. Other items include logo tableware, sculpture, tile art, and photographs taken on his fascinating research trips. After a shopping spree, you can grab a bite next door at Guy Harvey's Island Grill. 49 S. Church St., George Town. ✆ **345/943-4891.** www.guyharveyinc.com.

The Heritage Crafts Shop If you're looking for a mere souvenir, instead of a more expensive purchase, this is a good choice for handicrafts and gifts. Some of the trinkets are mere souvenirs. The location is near the harbor and a good choice for cruise ship passengers because of its convenience. Harbour Dr., George Town. ✆ **345/945-6041.**

Pirate's Grotto Another outlet for souvenirs of the Caymans is this very touristy shop on the lower level of the Landmark Shopping Center. Check carefully or you might find an island souvenir made in Asia. The shop also sells Cuban cigars, but you must smoke them on-island, as they are not allowed in the United States unless President Obama lifts the ban during his administration. Duty-free liquor is also sold at this outlet. Harbour Dr., George Town. ✆ **345/945-0244.**

JEWELRY

Bernard K. Passman Gallery ★★★ At two locations in George Town, this shop is a rare treasure, selling stunning black coral creations, including jewelry, of internationally acclaimed sculptor Bernard K. Passman. Connoisseurs of unusual fine jewelry and unique objets d'art are drawn to these outlets. Passman produced the Cayman Islands' wedding gift to Prince Charles and Lady Diana: a 97-piece cutlery set of sterling silver with black coral handles. Another commission for the Cayman Islands was the creation of a black coral horse and corgi dogs for Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip. Signed, limited edition pieces are excellent investments. Cardinal Plaza Bldg., Cardinal Ave., George Town (✆ **345/949-0123**); Port St., George Town (✆ **345/949-0170**). www.passman.com.

The Diamonds of the Sea

It is said that even the simplest meal tastes better with just a pinch of Cayman Sea Salt. With this in mind, mother-and-daughter team Monique and Vanessa Polack came up with an idea for a cottage industry. They started harvesting sea salt and using it as a cooking spice. Eventually they began to use these chunky crystals, which they call "diamonds of the sea," to make skin-softening, scented bath salts. Prices range from US$5 to US$30. For information, call ✆ **345/943-7258.** These salt products are available at the Cayman Sea Salt Booth at the Craft Market on the waterfront in George Town, at the Ritz-Carlton and Westin Hotels, and at various other outlets around the island.

Boutique Cartier ★★ This store is targeted at big spenders and connoisseurs of such timeless pieces as the Trinity ring and the Tank ring and watch, along with classic Cartier watches, including the Tank Française. The La Dona Jewelry and Watch Collection is stunning, bringing a touch of Paris's Place Vendôme to Grand Cayman. You can also buy pens and fashionable leather goods, all highly stylized, along with elegant silk scarves and deluxe perfumes. Cardinal Ave., George Town. ✆ **345/949-7477.** www.cartier.com.

Colombian Emeralds International Splashy, elegant, and glittery, this is one of the largest jewelry stores on Grand Cayman, almost directly across the street from the cruise ship terminal. As its name implies, a lot of emphasis here is on colored stones, including emerald and topaz. You'll find a wide selection of diamonds and timepieces as well. Corner of Cardinal Ave. and Harbour Dr., George Town. ✆ **345/949-8808.** www.colombianemeralds.com.

Mitzi's Fine Jewelry This plush, elegant jewelry store and art gallery was established by Mitzi Callan, the most famous and celebrated craftsperson in the Cayman Islands and winner of dozens of local and international art contests. Set just north of the Hyatt Hotel, on the opposite side of West Bay Road, it's a showcase of work imported by Ms. Callan, including Italian porcelain, Carrera & Carrera sculptures, and work she has designed herself from black coral, gold, platinum, and gemstones. Simple pieces of jewelry begin at around CI$30, and can rise to as much as CI$50,000. 5 Bay Harbour Centre, West Bay Rd., Seven Mile Beach. ✆ **345/945-5014.**

LINGERIE

Top Drawer The merchandise sold here is similar to the sexy and erotic lingerie successfully marketed in the U.S. by Victoria's Secret. Inside, you'll find the kind of "lounge wear" that a consenting adult might wear to seduce the mailman, Mr. Right, or her husband, depending on the circumstances. Brand names include Casa Bello, La Perla, and Jezebel. Come here with a credit card, a sense of humor, and a lot of imagination. In the Galleria Plaza, West Bay Rd., Seven Mile Beach. ✆ **345/945-5571.**

PERFUMES

La Perfumerie I and II These stores, set directly across the street from one another on Cardinal Avenue, contain the largest selection of perfumes and cosmetics on the island. If you're especially interested in cosmetics and makeup, head for Perfumerie I, the branch on the north side of the street; if perfume is your weakness, head for Perfumerie II, on the avenue's south side. Cardinal Ave., George Town. ✆ **345/949-7477.**

RUM & LIQUEURS

Tortuga Rum Company Founded in 1984, this company pioneered the first locally labeled rums in the Caymans, developing into the largest retail and duty-free liquor business in the little archipelago. Its most famous brands are Tortuga Gold, Rum Cream, Coffee Liqueur, Orange Rum Liqueur, and the 12-year-old Tortuga Gold Rum. Many people visit to purchase a carefully sealed rum cake, based on a century-old family recipe. The cake is the Cayman's number-one export and souvenir item. Tortuga Rum Ave., Industrial Park, George Town. ✆ **345/949-7701.** www.tortugarums.com.

SHOPPING MALLS

Many visitors, especially cruise ship passengers, don't go to the independent stores, but do one-stop shopping at Grand Cayman's heavily patronized malls. Lying south of the cruise ship docks on Harbour Drive, **Harbour Place** is the newest of them. Stores here range from the chic, such as Natalie Bishop Designer Clothes, to the sophisticated, including the Winery.

In George Town, at Carnival Avenue, stands the long-enduring **Kirk Freeport Plaza,** which carries all types of luxury items ranging from Gucci leather to duty-free china. Lots of designer labels are found here, including Rolex, Patek Philippe, Cartier, TAG Heuer, Omega, Roberto Coin, and Mikimoto. Near the Hyatt Hotel on West Bay Road is **Galleria Plaza,** opening onto Seven Mile Beach. Outlets here sell books, liquor, mobile phones, lingerie, sports equipment,

and even cosmetics. Also opening onto Seven Mile Beach, **West Shore Shopping Centre** is known for its artwork and casual sports clothing. The Centre also has a pharmacy, candle shop, and diving equipment store. Finally, consider **Queen's Court Shopping Centre,** another mall opening onto Seven Mile Beach. It boasts an eclectic collection of shops that sell everything from T-shirts with your favorite dogs printed on them to beauty products. Handicrafts and gifts are also hawked at outlets here.

STAMPS

For the philatelist in the family, Grand Cayman's main post office in George Town, at Edward Street and Cardinal Avenue (✆ **345/949-2474**), sells the Cayman Islands' beautiful stamps at the on-site philatelic bureau, open Monday to Friday 8:30am to 5:30pm and Saturday 8:30am to 1pm.

Artifacts Ltd. This is the premier outlet for some of the rare stamps issued by the Caymanian government. In U.S. coinage, stamps range in price from about US20¢ to US$900, and the inventory includes the rare War Tax Stamp issued during World War I. Other items for sale include antique Dutch and Spanish coins unearthed from shipwrecks, enameled boxes, and antique prints and maps. Harbour Dr. (across from the cruise ship dock), George Town. ✆ **345/949-2442.**

TOYS

Hobbies and Books This store sells toys "for all ages." The range of merchandise covers everything from the latest electronic toys to traditional board games. Special children's events are presented on Saturdays. Piccadilly Centre, George Town. ✆ **345/949-0707.**

8

Grand Cayman After Dark

Until fairly recently, a "rushed" day on Grand Cayman meant spending most of your time on Seven Mile Beach, perhaps doing a little shopping, and then sipping sunset drinks, followed by a long, leisurely dinner. To some extent, that custom still prevails.

Yet, lately, the choice of after-dark diversions has slowly but steadily grown. Weekends are sacred in the Cayman Islands, and the locals party hard; relaxation is taken very seriously. Of course, Grand Cayman hardly rivals Puerto Rico or Aruba for nightlife supremacy in the Caribbean, and unlike those two other islands, there's no gambling in the Caymans. The party-till-dawn crowd should travel elsewhere, since most venues are shut tight by 1am, and liquor licensing laws are strict in the Cayman Islands.

Often, some of the best bars on the island are attached to restaurants, so you can dine, drink, and party all in the same place.

The live-entertainment scene changes on a nightly basis. One club might be jumping with a live band one night, and then be calm, with no live entertainment, the following evening. Someone at your hotel's reception desk can usually tell you what the hot spots are on any given evening. Otherwise, grab a copy of the *Caymanian Compass* (**www.caycompass.com**), available at most hotels, which runs a comprehensive list on Fridays of entertainment choices for the weekend. If you want to see where the locals go, don't dismiss some of our more offbeat and low-key recommendations, including Antica Gelateria.

1 THE CLUB SCENE

The Next Level Opposite the Marriott Resort is a club that's hot every day of the week. The clientele is young and the parties get wild. If you want a more relaxed atmosphere, call ahead and try to reserve a private VIP lounge. One lounge is quieter than the rest; request it specifically if you plan to have in-depth conversations. The state-of-the-art lighting and sound systems make this club a perfect place for avid club-goers visiting the island. The disco ball gives the dance floor a Studio 54 look, but make no mistake, you won't see anyone doing the Hustle here.

Monday is all-you-can-drink night, when all your favorite top-40 hits are played. Women drink for CI$15, and men pay CI$25. If hip-hop is your thing, go to Tuesday night's Strictly Hip Hop Party. Wednesday features the sounds of the islands and is by far the most popular night. Visitors and locals come in herds to hear DJs Keith Tibbetts and Linbern Eden, who started their group, Coalition, in 1995. If you like Latin music, check out Thursday's Caliente Night, which is also especially popular for its CI$3.50 vodka–Red Bulls served all night. DJ Jeremie Voillot, aka Deliverance, is a young Canadian DJ who's been spinning for more than 5 years and is a Cayman favorite. On Friday night, crowd requests are taken and Saturday is a mixed night with dance hits from the 1970s to today. The club is open Monday to Friday from 10pm to 3am, and Saturday and Sunday 8pm to midnight. Seven Mile Beach. ✆ **345/946-6398.** http://nextlevelcayman.com. Cover CI$5–CI$10.

O Bar In a two-story shopping plaza off West Bay Road, this nightclub is the only one in the Caribbean that's open weeknights and closed on Saturday and Sunday. Located immediately adjacent to the Attic Billiard Lounge (p. 153), it's a large, glossy, terra-cotta-and-black space with an industrial-looking steel staircase that leads to a hideaway lounge. There's been a concerted effort here to appeal to the island's hip, urbanized, and trend-conscious yuppies, with DJs imported from faraway New York, and a focus on bringing in cutting-edge music. Look for lots of circle motifs in the decor (hence the name "O Bar"). Beer costs around CI$5 a mug, and cocktails go for CI$7 each. The club is open Monday to Friday from 5pm to 1am, Saturday to Sunday 1pm to midnight. In the Queen's Court Plaza, West Bay Rd. ✆ **345/943-6227.** www.obar.ky. Cover CI$5.

Royal Palms Beach Club Opening onto Seven Mile Beach, this is one of the premier live-music venues for islanders and visitors. The bar, open to the trade winds, is a great place to dance in the moonlight. We recommend the on-site restaurant, the **Reef Grill** (p. 91), but many patrons choose to dine elsewhere before coming here for the rest of their evening out. On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights, live bands play calypso, light reggae, salsa, and merengue, among other music styles. The club caters to a wide age group, from those in their 20s and 30s to those beyond 50. The bar opens daily at 9am and stays open until 11pm, though the action doesn't get underway until 8:30pm. The club closes as late as 1am on Friday and Saturday and at 10pm throughout the week. West Bay Rd. ✆ **345/945-6358.** No cover.

2 BAR/RESTAURANT COMBOS

AquaBeach Restaurant & Bar Set across the road from the beach in a funky beer, babes, and sports venue, AquaBeach places high emphasis on sports and two-for-ones (margaritas, beers, rum punches), which come and go as quickly as your after-binge headaches. DJs spin on Fridays; live bands raise a ruckus on Saturdays. The restaurant specializes in burgers and steaks (p. 93). The kitchen is open daily from 11am to 11pm, and the bar closes at 1am Monday to Friday, at midnight Saturday and Sunday. 426 West Bay Rd., Seven Mile Beach. ✆ **345/949-8498.** www.aquabeach.ky.

Coconut Joe's Beach Bar & Grill Something's always going on at this little hot spot. Located across from the Comfort Suites, this used to be a run-down and modest private house on the "wrong" side of the road. The young and hip staff comes from all over the world, including Italy, Australia, the U.S., and various parts of Canada. Some crazy event is always being planned. Past soirees include boat cruises, bikini parties, and the annual St. Patrick's Day party. The bartender will mix you up almost any drink you can think of and the cocktails are reasonably priced. Try a "beergarita," a Corona and margarita hybrid. Main courses range from CI$8 to CI$28, and include juicy burgers and chicken, beef, and shrimp rice bowls. Coconut Joe's is open Monday to Saturday, the grill from 6:30am to 1am, and the beach bar from 10am to 1am. 362 West Bay Rd., Seven Mile Beach. ✆ **345/943-JOES** (5637).

Kaibo Beach Bar & Grill This fun, relaxed, hip, counterculture spot—collectively called "the Kaibo Yacht Club" (p. 88)—contains both a bar and a special dining area. Far from the maddening crowd of tourists and touristy infrastructure closer to George Town, it's perched on the island's distant corner, and the raffish beach-level bar is a major stop on the Grand Cayman nightlife circuit. Clients are fun and free-spirited. In many cases, customers are East Coast Americans and Canadian-born refugees from the frigid snow, who mingle gracefully with local Caymanians and boat owners. In the downstairs bar, you can enjoy a menu of sandwiches, burgers, and salads. Drinks of choice, served in copious quantities throughout the day and evening, include Mudslides, Bloody Caesars, and Sex on the Beach, priced between CI$5.50 and CI$10 each. The entire place is fun, romantic, and appealingly permissive. The bar and grill are open daily from 11am to 11pm. In the Kaibo Yacht Club, 858 Water Bay Rd., North Side. ✆ **345/947-9975.** www.kaibo.ky.

Morgan's Harbour Marina Thanks to the charm of its Austrian-born owner, Richard Schweiger, this bar enjoys a reputation for mixing millionaires from New York into the same workaday setting with local roustabouts and marina crew members. Shoehorned between gas pumps at the nearby marina and stocks of provisions for outfitting boats, there's a battered bar area serving stiff drinks, fresh lobster, and platters of burgers, salads, and steaks priced at CI$19 to CI$32. It's open daily from 7am to 1am. Morgan's Harbour. ✆ **345/949-3948.**

3 BARS

Bamboo Lounge Few other bars in Grand Cayman have as aggressively (and successfully) tapped into a market of young, attractive, trend-conscious, and upwardly mobile singles as this one. Be prepared to deal with local hipsters and/or hipster wannabes here, along with a strong dose of food-and-beverage marketing hype. Also expect to spend more than you would at an everyday pub.

Amid tones of red, black, and bamboo, you'll find a bustling, intimate bar area on one side, a state-of-the-art sushi kitchen on the other, and at the top of a short flight of steps, a stylishly minimalist lounge with tables. Dining takes place in an ultramodern, Asian-influenced setting with full-grained wood detailing. A long list of light dishes—including sushi, sashimi, and artfully prepared appetizers—can be combined to make a full meal. Live jazz is presented every Tuesday night beginning around 8pm. The ambience is fun and flirtatious.

Drinks run the gamut from the standard and conventional to the "students-on-spring-break-getting-bombed" variety. A Wiki Waki Woo is an example of the latter. According to the menu, its blend of vodka, tequila, rum, three kinds of sweet liqueurs, and two kinds of fruit juice is guaranteed "to make you crazy." Another spring-break-style drink is the Samurai Sunset, made from raspberry-flavored sake, vodka, and peach schnapps. A list of martinis reveals headache-inducing combinations of ingredients with names that you might find a bit corny. The bar and restaurant are open Monday to Friday from 5:30pm to 1am and Saturday 5:30pm to midnight. On the ground floor of Grand Cayman Beach Suites (p. 62). ✆ **345/947-8744.** www.grand-cayman-beach-suites.com.

My Bar ★ (Finds) Located on the premises of the Sunset House Hotel (p. 69), this is one of Grand Cayman's most dramatically designed bars. Set on a smooth cement platform near the coastline, it's about 1.2km (¾ mile) south of George Town. Because its two predecessors were swept away by hurricanes, its designers sank its

foundations deep into the bedrock and capped it with the highest and most elaborate Polynesian-style thatched roof (it contains an estimated 36,000 palm fronds) on Grand Cayman. Come here for a grandly proportioned and very relaxing indoor-outdoor venue. Many local residents, including lots of Caymanian lawyers, have adopted this bar as their regular hangout and engage in spirited games of dominoes that are followed by many of the bar's patrons. My Bar is especially busy on Friday nights, when the energy level is high. It's open Monday to Friday from 10am to 1am, Saturday 10am to midnight, and Sunday 11:30am to midnight. At the Sunset House Hotel, 390 S. Church St., George Town. ✆ **345/949-7111.** www.sunsethouse.com.

4 THE BEST PUBS

Fidel Murphy's ★ This is the unofficial Irish headquarters of Grand Cayman. Large gatherings of drinkers avidly follow the pub's live broadcasts of Gaelic soccer, rugby, and hurling matches. The pub provides Irish wit, charm, and nostalgia with a Caribbean twist, as the owners tried to convey by adding "Fidel" to the name of the pub.

The place originated in 1999 when the mostly Irish staff of a Cuban restaurant (La Habana) called in a team of architectural designers from the Guinness brewery in Ireland. Within a few months, the Guinness team had built and shipped, from Dublin, a dark-paneled, prefabricated, late-Victorian pub, complete with brass trim and ornate railings. The place is so authentic that after about an hour and a few drinks, even the Spanish-language speakers seem to develop a brogue. Expect a winning combination of bar and dining space. Seven kinds of beer, plus cider, are on tap, and Irish breakfasts (bacon, sausage, tomato, black-and-white pudding, baked beans, and two fried eggs) are available at all hours. Other menu items include shepherd's pie, steak and Guinness pie, grilled lamb cutlets, shrimp and chips, and such island food as Fidel's chicken curry and Cuban-style pork tenderloin. An Irish breakfast costs CI$11; sandwiches and salads range from CI$9.50 to CI$12. Main-course platters range from CI$10 to CI$17. The bar is open Monday to Friday from 10am to 1am, Saturday and Sunday 7am to midnight. The kitchen closes at 11pm. In the Queens Court Shopping Plaza. ✆ **345/949-5189.** www.caymangoodtaste.com.

Lone Star Bar & Grill You can enjoy juicy burgers in the dining room or head for the bar in back at this transplanted corner of the Texas Panhandle. Here, beneath murals of Lone Star beauties, you can sip lime or strawberry margaritas and watch several sports events simultaneously on 14 TV screens. Monday and Thursday are fajita nights,

all-you-can-eat affairs, at CI$13, and Tuesday is all-y ou-can-eat spicy tacos, for CI$10; Wednesday is all-you-can-eat surf and turf, at CI$27. The bar and grill ar e open Monday to Friday from 11am to 1am, S aturday and Sunday 11am to midnight. West Bay Rd. ✆ **345/945-5175.**

Rackham's Waterfront ★ Because of the hip , hospitable, and well-informed locals who congr egate within its appealingly casual premises, Rackham's is the first pub w e visit ev ery time w e come to Grand Cayman. The pub is set on an open-air pier jutting seawar d, just south of the center of G eorge Town, and is pr otected from the sun and rain by an overhanging roof. As you gaze seaward from your perch her e, notice the schools of tarpon swimming beneath the pier. The pub was named after "Calico J ack" Rackham, an 18th-century pirate who seemed to delight in terrorizing the shipping lanes offshore.

The friendly local cr owd at Rackham's includes paralegals, financiers, and office wor kers fr om thr oughout Canada, B ritain, and the U.S.; about a half-doz en waterspor ts pr ofessionals; and a healthy mixture of West Indian locals. Come here for insight into who's living and wor king on G rand Cayman these days. E veryone—thanks partially to the par ty-colored cocktails ser ved—gets along swimmingly well. Shots of Jack Daniels cost CI$5 each, and a head-spinning v ersion of Cayman Islands lemonade (vodka, peach schnapps, triple sec, cranberry juice, and whiskey sour mix) goes for CI$6. American and international fare is ser ved at the r estaurant, including burgers, fries, conch salad, and filet of beef with french fries. Salads and sandwiches cost CI$9 to CI$12, with main courses priced from CI$13 to CI$28. It's open M onday to F riday fr om 10am to midnight, S aturday and Sunday 11am to 11pm. N. Church St. ✆ **345/945-3860.**

Wreck Bar & Grill One of our fav orite watering holes is at R um Point, which can be r eached b y boat. D ivers and snor kelers, some arriving with stingray "hickeys," join expats and occasional cruise ship passengers to form a v aried age gr oup and all appr eciate the charms of this laid-back joint. I t's the latest r eincarnation of an old thatched bar that stood her e in the 1950s, during which time a bar tender named "O ld J udd" is said to hav e inv ented the world 's first fr ozen Mudslide. Sunday is the most popular time to visit, when locals arrive in their priv ate boats. I n addition to two-fisted drinks, enjo y West Indian food, ranging fr om conch (fritters or cho wder) to jer k-pork sandwiches and juicy burgers. You can eat outside at a picnic table under a casuarina tree. The bartender's special is the Attlee Mudslide. Saturday afternoons fr om 2 to 5pm is also a big time her e, with a barbecue and live entertainment right on the beach. The bar and grill is open daily from 10am to 5pm. Rum Point. ✆ **345/947-9412.**

5 CAYMANIAN PASTIME: THE POOL HALL BAR

The Attic Billiard Lounge On the upper floor of a building in a shopping center off West Bay Road, this pool hall attracts a higher percentage of visitors than the larger, noisier, more raucous, and more interesting Corner Pocket Pool Hall. Here at the Attic, you'll pay a fee of CI$13 per hour for use of one of eight pool tables or one snooker table. Old Dutch beer (brewed locally and priced at CI$3 per pint) is the drink of choice for many of the players here, most of whom wouldn't dream of congregating until after 8 or 9pm. If you're hungry, burgers and sandwiches can be prepared in the tiny kitchen for CI$5 to CI$11. The lounge is open Monday to Friday from 5pm to 1am, Saturday and Sunday 1pm to midnight. In the Queen's Court Plaza, West Bay Rd. ✆ **345/949-7665.** www.attic.ky.

Corner Pocket Pool Hall ★ Locals crowd this trendy pool hall in Grand Cayman to drink, flirt, gossip, and, in many cases, actually play some intense games of pool. It lies on the second floor of an industrial-looking, all-concrete building in a commercial zone about 2.4km (1½ miles) north of the center of George Town. If you can handle the transition from the glittery tourist-oriented world of West Bay Road to the dark, permissive, and distinctly insider atmosphere here, this venue can be a whole lot of fun—we prefer it over the Attic Billiard Lounge. There is a very real possibility that you'll be invited to join some off-the-record wagers (we don't advise this unless you really know what you're doing). You pay CI$6 per half-hour for a pool table, regardless of how many people are playing. With only six pool tables, you will most likely put your name on the waiting list. Have a drink and relax in the meantime. Besides pool, you'll also find a steady diet of country-western or rap music, friendly dart competitions, and welcoming patrons and staff. It's open Monday to Thursday from 4pm to 1am, Friday 3pm to 1am, and Saturday and Sunday 4pm to midnight. 139 Allister Towers, N. Sound Rd., George Town. ✆ **345/946-8080.**

6 OTHER DIVERSIONS

Antica Gelateria The variety of ice cream flavors sold here surpasses the selection at any other outlet in the Cayman Islands. Tucked away in a shopping center off West Bay Road, just behind the also-recommended Cimboco Caribbean Cafe (p. 100), it was established

in 2002 by the Casteldello family, an Italian family who knows a lot about gelato and how a *gelateria* should be run. You'll find about two dozen varieties of ice cream here, including all the flavors you might find in an ice cream parlor in Rome or Palermo, as well as such Caribbean-influenced selections as mango, pineapple, apricot, almond and rum, and chocolate and rum. Servings cost from CI$3.50 to CI$6, and ice cream cones go for CI$3.50 each. Takeout ice cream costs CI$6 per pint. It's open Tuesday to Sunday from 2 to 10pm. In the Marquee Shopping Center, Harquail Bypass near West Bay Rd. ✆ **345/946-1400.**

The Harquail Theatre Mrs. Helen Harquail donated this US$4-million theater in memory of her late husband, EJ. Harquail. Musicals, dramas, and comedies featuring local performers are regularly produced on the Harquail stage. Seating 330, the theater is also the venue for classical concerts, operas, dance performances, art exhibitions, fashion shows, and other events. Tickets usually run between CI$5 and CI$45. The theater also hosts the International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame ceremony in January (p. 19). Harquail Dr. (a bypass heading north from George Town). ✆ **345/949-5477.** www.ecayonline.com.

9

Cayman Brac

A 17th-century Scottish fisherman named this "middle" 19km-long (12-mile) island of the Caymans *Brac* (Gaelic for "bluff"). The Bluff is a towering limestone plateau rising 42m (138 ft.) above the sea, covering the eastern half of Cayman Brac. Caymanians refer to the island simply as Brac, and its 1,400 inhabitants, a hospitable bunch of people, are called Brackers. Pirates occupied the Caymans in the early–18th century, and Edward Teach, the infamous Blackbeard, supposedly spent quite a bit of time around Cayman Brac. The island is about 143km (89 miles) east of Grand Cayman.

More than 170 caves honeycomb the limestone heights of the island. Some of the caves are at the Bluff's foot; others can be reached only by climbing over jagged limestone rock. One of the biggest is Great Cave, which has a number of chambers. Harmless fruit bats cling to the roofs of the caverns.

You won't see many people on the south side of the Bluff, and the only sound is the sea crashing against the lava-like shore. You'll find the island's herons and wild green parrots here. Most Brackers live on the north side, in traditional wooden seaside cottages, some of which were built by the island's pioneers. Looking at the variety of flowers, shrubs, and fruit trees in many of the Brackers' yards, it's clear that many islanders have green thumbs. You'll see poinciana trees, bougainvillea, Cayman orchids, croton, hibiscus, aloe, sea grapes, cactuses, and coconut and cabbage palms. Gardeners grow cassava, pumpkins, breadfruit, yams, and sweet potatoes.

No actual towns are on the island, only settlements—such as Stake Bay (the "capital"), Spot Bay, the Creek, Tibbetts Turn, the Bight, and West End—which are clustered by the airport.

Warning: Cayman Brac was severely damaged by hurricane winds in late 2008. Some of the smaller businesses were wiped out, and many may not reopen as the same establishments.

Other more established properties should have restored their structures by the time of your arrival. Look for lots of changes going on here in the lifetime of this edition.

Hotels quote their rates in U.S. dollars, whereas most restaurants give you a choice of paying in the Yankee dollar or else in the local Caymanian currency.

1 ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION

Cayman Brac Tourist Office, West End Road, North Side (✆ **345/948-1649**), is open Monday to Friday 8:30am to noon and 1 to 5pm, dispensing information about the island. It's located to the east of the little airport.

GETTING THERE

Cayman Airways (✆ **800/422-9626** in the U.S. or 345/949-8200; www.caymanairways.com) offers seven flights a week to and from Cayman Brac on Boeing 737s, which carry 122 passengers. The flights leave from Miami and make a short stop on Grand Cayman.

The cost of a round-trip ticket ranges from US$132 to US$157 per person. Note in advance that the larger planes, such as the 737s, with 122 seats, that fly this route allow twice the luggage allotment per passenger, without payment of the additional supplements of the 18-seaters, so if you have a lot of luggage, it's wise to book a flight on the larger plane.

GETTING AROUND

You have a choice of a taxi, bike, rental vehicle, or your trusty feet. Renting a car is easiest, especially if you don't like getting stuck in the hot sun.

CAR RENTALS Car rental agencies will meet your incoming flight if you make reservations in advance. You won't find many rental places here, so reserve as far in advance as possible during the winter season.

B & S Motor Ventures, 422 Channel Rd., South Side (✆ **345/948-1646;** www.bandsmv.com), is run by the helpful Steve and Nola Bodden, who will supply you with plenty of insider information about Cayman Brac. Cars and jeeps cost US$40 per day. The best deal is their weekly rate, beginning at US$240 for 6 to 7 days. SUVs can be rented for US$45 per day. They also rent bikes and scooters (see below).

Brac Rent-a-Car, Tibbetts Square (✆ **345/948-1515;** www.bracrentals.com), rents Toyota Corollas for US$38 per day. **Four D's Car Rental,** Kidco Building, South Side (✆ **345/948-1599**), offers car rentals for US$35 a day and up, and vans for US$45 a day. If you rent for 6 days, the seventh day is free.

TAXIS Service is slow and not very organized, but it is available. Be prepared, however, to wait. Taxis do not always meet incoming planes unless arrangements are made in advance. Most taxi companies will

take you on a 2-hour tour for CI$24 per person. All the taxi companies charge the same tariffs. Traveling from the airport to one of the resorts or villas on Stake Bay along the north side of the island costs about CI$8 to CI$40 per person.

The leading taxi services are **D&M** (✆ **345/948-2307**) and **Elo's Taxi** (✆ **345/948-0220**).

BIKES & SCOOTERS You can explore almost all of Cayman Brac by bike or scooter, except for the area around the Bluff, which is too difficult. Most roads along the coast are flat and easy to traverse by bike. The main road across the west of Cayman Brac is also a relatively easy cycle route.

Many hotels either lend or rent bikes to guests. If yours doesn't, you can rent both bicycles and scooters from **B & S Motor Ventures** (✆ **345/948-1646;** www.bandsmv.com). Scooters cost US$30 per day or US$180 for 6 to 7 days. Bikes rent for US$13 per day or US$75 for a week. If you find that the bike your hotel lends or rents is too simple, you can get a bike with gears and good brakes from B & S. The company will deliver a bike or scooter to you at any location on the island.

Fast Facts Cayman Brac

Banks The local branch of **Cayman National Bank** is at 14 West End, Cross Roads (✆ **345/948-1451**). It's open Monday to Thursday 9am to 4pm and Friday 9am to 4:30pm. It has the only **ATM** on the island.

Dentist For dental service, call ✆ **345/948-2618.**

Emergencies The main safety issue here is climbers having accidents while attempting to scale the Bluff. In the event of an accident, the only rescue agency is the fire department. Dial ✆ **911.**

Hospitals & Clinics The government-run **Faith Hospital** is at Stake Bay (✆ **345/948-2225**). The hospital is open daily 24 hours. For a nonemergency consultation with a doctor, you can visit the hospital daily from 8:30am to 5pm. The **Cayman Brac Clinic** at Tibbetts Square, West End (✆ **345/948-1777**), is open Monday to Friday 8am to noon and 3 to 6pm, and Saturday 9am to noon. For clinic treatment outside opening hours, call ✆ **345/948-2363.**

Internet Access You can access the Internet at **Brac Reef Beach Resort,** South Side (✆ **345/948-1323**), which provides

Wi-Fi in the lobby daily from 7am to 9pm. Internet access is also available at the post office (see below), for CI$6 per hour.

Pharmacies The hospital and clinic mentioned above under "Hospitals & Clinics" have small pharmacies.

Post Office The **Cayman Brac Post Office,** West End (✆ **345/948-1422**), is open Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 5pm and Saturday 9 to 11:30am. Branch post offices are also near Tibbetts Square in Stake Bay, at Watering Place, and at Spot Bay, each open Monday to Friday 9 to 11:30am and 1:30 to 3pm.

Water Drinking water is distilled sea water, perfectly safe to drink.

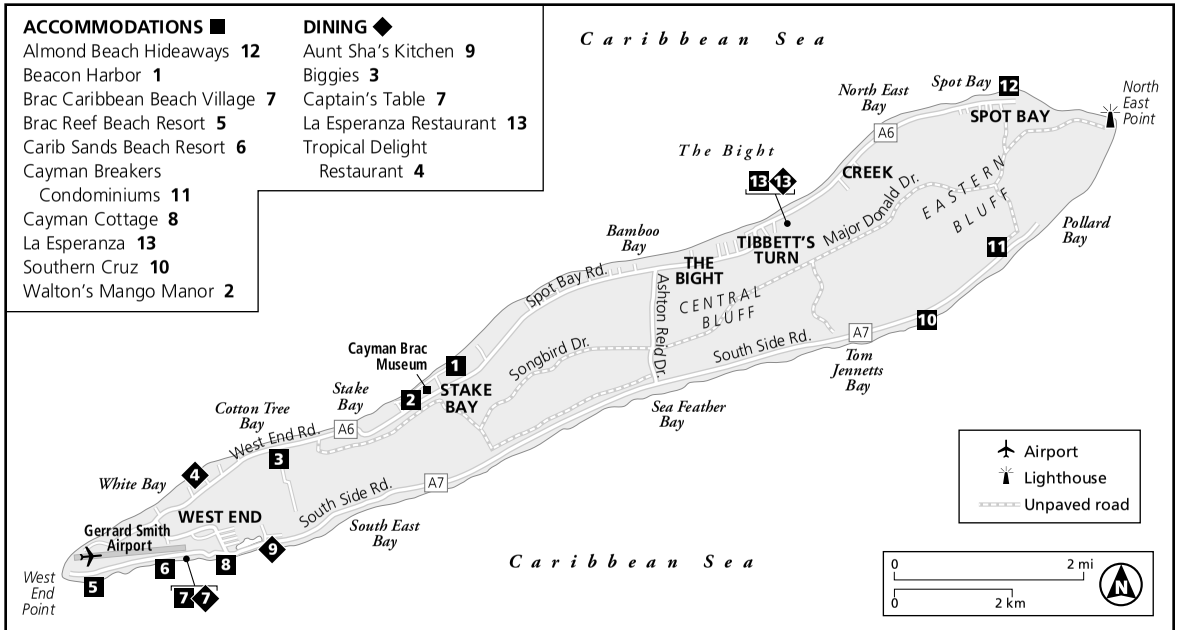
2 WHERE TO STAY

THE MAJOR SCUBA-DIVING RESORTS

Brac Caribbean Beach Village ★ The largest condo structure on the island offers 16 bright, spacious two-bedroom/two-bathroom or two-bedroom/three-bathroom condos on a white sand beach, along with a pool and a scuba-diving program. Each unit has a full-size refrigerator with an icemaker and a microwave, and 12 units open onto private balconies. A variety of items, including breakfast food, are stocked before your arrival. The master bedroom is furnished with a queen-size bed, the guest bedrooms with twin beds. The units are rather simply furnished in a Caribbean tropical motif. The hotel provides some of the best dining on the island, at the Captain's Table (see below).

Stake Bay (P.O. Box 4), Cayman Brac, B.W.I. ✆ **866/843-2722** or 345/948-2265. Fax 345/948-1111. www.866thebrac.com. 16 units. Winter US$185 apt for 2, US$245 apt for 4 and weekly US$1,100 apt for 2, US$1,600 apt for 4; off season US$139 apt for 2, US$184 apt for 4 and weekly US$825 apt for 2, US$1,200 apt for 4. Dive packages from US$888 per person double occupancy, including 7-night stay and 5 days of 2-tank dives. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant, bar; outdoor pool; extensive watersports equipment/rentals. *In room:* A/C, ceiling fans, TV, kitchen.

Brac Reef Beach Resort ★ On a sandy plot of land on the south shore 3km (2 miles) east of the airport, near some of the best snorkeling in the region, this family-friendly, family-run resort contains motel-style units comfortably furnished with carpeting and


ACCOMMODATIONS ■
Almond Beach Hideaways 12
Beacon Harbor 1
Brac Caribbean Beach Village 7
Brac Reef Beach Resort 5
Carib Sands Beach Resort 6
Cayman Breakers Condominiums 11
Cayman Cottage 8
La Esperanza 13
Southern Cruz 10
Walton's Mango Manor 2
DINING ◆
Aunt Sha's Kitchen 9
Biggies 3
Captain's Table 7
La Esperanza Restaurant 13
Tropical Delight Restaurant 4
Caribbean Sea
North East Bay
Spot Bay 12
SPOT BAY
North East Point
A6
The Bight
13
CREEK
EASTERN BLUFF
Major Donald Dr.
Bamboo Bay
TIBBETT'S TURN
THE BIGHT
CENTRAL BLUFF
Pollard Bay
11
Spot Bay Rd.
Ashton Reid Dr.
Songbird Dr.
South Side Rd.
A7
10
Tom Jennetts Bay
Cayman Brac Museum
1
Stake Bay
2
STAKE BAY
Sea Feather Bay
Cotton Tree Bay
West End Rd.
A6
3
White Bay
4
South Side Rd.
A7
WEST END
Gerrard Smith Airport
South East Bay
9
5
6
8
7
7
West End Point
Caribbean Sea
Airport
Lighthouse
Unpaved road
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N

ceiling fans. Durable and resilient, it's the most visible hotel on Cayman Brac. Once the location was little more than a maze of sea grapes, a few of whose venerable trunks still rise amid the picnic tables, hammocks, and boardwalks. There are still lots of nature trails surrounding the resort, good for bird-watching. A dive shop is on the premises. Don't expect grandeur or anything approaching urban style or posh: It simply isn't part of the equation here.

P.O. Box 56, KY2-2001 Cayman Brac, B.W.I. ✆ **800/594-0843** or 727/369-2507 for reservations in the U.S. and Canada, or 345/948-1323. www.bracreef.com. 40 units. US$470 for diver, US$274 for nondiver. Rates include 3-night stay; diver rates include 3 1-tank dives per day. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant, bar; babysitting; exercise room; Internet facility; Jacuzzi; outdoor pool; tennis court (lit). *In room:* A/C, ceiling fans, TV, hair dryer.

A GUESTHOUSE

Walton's Mango Manor ★★ Unique on Cayman Brac, this is a personalized, intimate B&B that's more richly decorated, more elegant, and more appealing than you might have thought possible in such a remote place. Originally the home of a sea captain, it was moved to a less exposed location and rebuilt from salvaged materials shortly after the disastrous hurricane of 1932. Set on 1.6 hectares (4 acres) on the island's north shore, within a lush garden, it contains intriguing touches such as a banister salvaged from the mast of a 19th-century schooner. The best accommodations are on the upper floor and have narrow balconies with sea views. There is also a two-bedroom, two-bathroom luxury villa, the perfect getaway for two to four guests. The villa contains a kitchen, washer/dryer, phone, TV, and both air-conditioning and ceiling fans. Your hosts are Brooklyn-born Lynne Walton and her husband, George, a former USAF major who retired to his native Cayman Brac.

Stake Bay (P.O. Box 56), Cayman Brac, B.W.I. ✆/fax **345/948-0518.** www.waltonsmangomanor.com. 6 units. Winter US$120–US$130 double; off season US$105–US$115 double; year-round villa US$185 daily or US$1,200 weekly for 1–2 people, US$210 per night or US$1,400 per week for 3–4 people. Rates for doubles include full breakfast. MC, V. *In room:* A/C, no phone.

SELF-CATERING VILLAS & APARTMENTS

Almond Beach Hideaways ★ (Finds) Outside your door, the scene looks like a picture postcard, with a beachfront of white sand against a backdrop of coconut palms. Think of these villas as get-away-from-it-all hideaways. The free-standing, air-conditioned, two-bedroom villas here offer much tranquillity and privacy. Each has its own patio, private bathrooms, and fully equipped kitchen including a large refrigerator. The master bedroom houses a queen-size bed; the guest bedroom has two twin beds; the living room includes a queen sofa bed.

All bed and bathroom linens are supplied, and a member of the staff will meet you at the airport to transport you to the villa. In addition, maid service and a caretaker are on call 24 hours a day. Hammocks, chaise lounges, a beach cabana, and a barbecue grill are available.

Spot Bay (P.O. Box 132), Cayman Brac, B.W.I. ✆ **866/222-8528.** Fax 503/472-6394. www.almondbeachhideaways.com. 2 villas. US$185 double, US$210 triple, US$240 quad; weekly US$1,150 double, US$1,300 triple, US$1,500 quad. Each additional person US$30. Children 8 and under stay free in parent's room. MC, V. **Amenities:** Babysitting. *In room:* A/C, TV/VCR, kitchen.

Beacon Harbor ★ (Finds) Built on piers, these luxury beachfront condos on the north side of the island were custom-made for scuba divers. They lie near Stake Bay, opposite a trio of excellent dive sites and near some spectacular offshore snorkeling spots. In the open area downstairs, which has room to park your vehicle, you'll find toilets, outside showers, and even wash-down facilities for scuba gear. Each of the upstairs accommodations can sleep six comfortably. The airy, comfortable rooms, decorated with tile floors and tropical colors like sea-foam green and peach, feature wicker furniture and vinyl cushions; pictures of Cayman Brac marine life decorate the walls. Each bedroom comes with a queen-size bed and a large living room with a queen-size hide-a-bed. Guests often prepare their own meals in the fully equipped kitchen, and a grocery store is just around the corner in Stake Bay. A separate laundry room lies outside your front door, and sliding glass doors open onto a 92-sq.-m (990-sq.-ft.) deck. Maid service can be arranged for an additional charge.

Stake Bay, Cayman Brac, B.W.I. ✆ **956/544-4396.** Fax 512/273-2191. www.beaconharbor.com. 2 condos. US$205; weekly US$1,250. Extra person US$40. MC, V. **Amenities:** Babysitting. *In room:* A/C, TV/VCR, CD player, hair dryer, kitchen.

Carib Sands Beach Resort ★ (Kids) This is one of the island's most modern oceanfront condo resorts. Attractively furnished one- to four-bedroom units all have fully equipped kitchens. The resort often attracts families. The first-class property opens onto one of the most idyllic strands of white sand on Cayman Brac and boasts an on-site dive center. The concrete condos are furnished with Navajo white wicker furniture, often set against dramatic tones of blue, burgundy, or sea green. Rooms open onto either a garden view or a vista of the ocean. Rollaways can be provided for extra guests. A bar and restaurant are a short stroll from the resort.

Stake Bay (P.O. Box 4), Cayman Brac, B.W.I. ✆ **866/843-2722** or 345/948-1121. Fax 345/948-1111. www.866thebrac.com. 52 condos. Year-round US$185 1-bedroom, US$245 2-bedroom, US$305 3-bedroom, US$365 4-bedroom. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant, bar; babysitting; bikes; outdoor pool; watersports equipment/rentals. *In room:* A/C, TV, CD player, kitchen.

Cayman Breakers Condominiums This condominium development lies on the secluded southeast end of the island. If you're interested in diving, rock climbing, cave exploring, or other adventurous activities, this is the place for you. To help you get started, you'll find a book on Cayman Brac attractions in each unit. Complimentary use of bikes makes it easier to get to activity spots. Guests also have access to a private shore dive entrance.

The units all have two bedrooms and two bathrooms, living room, kitchen, and utility room complete with a washer and dryer. You can relax in a well-kept courtyard with picnic tables and barbecue grills. The congenial managers, Robert and Nina Banks, live on-site and are more than happy to assist you with any of your needs.

Southeast End, Cayman Brac, B.W.I. ✆ **345/948-1463.** Fax 345/948-1407. www.caymancondosonline.com. 18 condos. Year-round US$157–US$172 per night for up to 2 people. 7-night minimum. MC, V. **Amenities:** Bikes; outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, kitchen, Wi-Fi (free).

Cayman Cottage ★ (Finds) If your dream is to retreat to a little West Indian cottage hideaway with a loved one, here's your chance. Seclusion and privacy prevail at this cottage, lying just 23m (75 ft.) from a white sand beach. The fully furnished cottage is on the grounds of the owner's home on the West End/south side of the island. The cottage provides 183 sq. m (1,970 sq. ft.) of living space, including a private bedroom, a large living and dining area, a bathroom with a tub/shower combo, a fully equipped kitchen, and a washer/dryer.

South Side, Cayman Brac, B.W.I. ✆ **505/898-6854** in the U.S. or 345/948-1617. Fax 345/948-1350. www.caymancottage.com. 1 guesthouse. Year-round US$130–US$150 for 2–4 people. Children 9 and under stay free in parent's room. No credit cards. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, kitchen.

La Esperanza ★ (Finds) This modern complex consists of a series of apartment and cottage rentals on the north side, with easy access to a private beach on the south side. The complex lies midway along the north shore. Launched in 1986 when it was a small gathering place for four friends and the only spot in the area for people to come and relax in the "cool, cool, cool of the evening," as the popular '50s song went, the complex grew, but even today is still relatively small and casual. It's better known for its restaurant and bar (p. 164) than for its accommodations.

Each well-furnished and comfortable apartment, decorated in a typical light, breezy West Indian style, consists of two bedrooms with 1½ bathrooms, a full kitchen, and a living/dining room. The cottage has three bedrooms and two bathrooms with showers, plus a full kitchen, living room, dining room, and open-air deck. Under large

trees or other open shelters on the grounds, you'll find a lot of extras, including laundry facilities, an outside shower, gas grills, and hammocks. Sometimes the rare blue iguana will stroll onto the grounds looking for a tasty treat (they don't eat people, so don't worry).

Cars can also be rented here for US$40 per day. Free transportation can be arranged between the lodgings and the beach.

Stake Bay (P.O. Box 216), Cayman Brac, B.W.I. ✆ **345/948-0591.** Fax 345/948-0525. www.laesperanza.net. 11 units. Year-round US$94 double in apt, US$125–US$138 double in cottage. Extra person US$15. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant, bar; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchen.

Southern Cruz Although the setting is a bit bleak—no lush landscaping except for a buffer grove of sea grapes—this is one of the most comfortable small-house rentals on the island. For many visitors, it would make an ideal "second home" in the Caribbean.

The concrete units are decorated in a typical West Indian style, with pastels, white washed woods, and tiles. The rentals each have a well-maintained, medium-size private bathroom. The sofa bed in the living room can be converted to receive additional guests. Each of the bedrooms has a king-size bed and a walk-in closet. You can enjoy the ocean view with a cup of coffee in the morning from your private patio, or a cocktail at night from the covered porch. The kitchen is generously equipped with utensils and hardware. There's also a laundry room adjacent to the kitchen, and an outside shower to wash off sand after a day at the beach. The oceanfront house accommodates up to six, making it an ideal space for families, or a small group of friends who can appreciate its casual, laid-back style. Hammocks are strung up on the covered porch for lazy enjoyment of the surroundings. Other features include a barbecue grill and covered parking.

South Side, Cayman Brac, B.W.I. ✆ **877/229-6637** in the U.S. www.mcginleyvacationcabins.com/caymanbrac.html. 2 units. Winter US$215; off season US$200. MC, V. *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchen.

3 WHERE TO DINE

MODERATE

Biggie's AMERICAN/CONTINENTAL It's the newest restaurant on the island, the kind of place that generated a lot of buzz when it first opened, and a place whose staff and owner (Kent Rankin) work hard to keep clients happy. It faces a traffic roundabout on the island's West End, occupying a peachy-white-painted dining room with clean white napery and glass-topped tables. Lunches focus on an all-you-can-eat American-style buffet of salads and hot foods; dinners are

 more elaborate, more formal, and permeated with continental flair, with lots of emphasis on seafood, chicken, beef, and pastas, some of them all vegetarian.

West End. ✆ **345/948-2449.** Reservations recommended. Lunch buffet CI$16; dinner main courses CI$15–CI$45. MC, V. Daily 11am–2:30pm and 5:30–9pm.

Captain's Table ★ AMERICAN The decor here is vaguely nautical, with oars over and around the bar and pieces of boats forming the restaurant's entryway. The restaurant has both indoor, air-conditioned seating and outdoor, poolside dining. Every Saturday night, its karaoke party draws in more business than any other bar on the island. Begin a meal here with shrimp and lobster cocktail or a conch fritter, and then try one of the soups, such as black bean or a tomato-based conch chowder. Main dishes include everything from the catch of the day, often served pan-fried, to barbecue ribs. Lunch features burgers, salads, and sandwiches.

In Brac Caribbean Beach Village, Stake Bay. ✆ **345/948-1418.** Reservations recommended. Main courses lunch CI$8–CI$12, dinner CI$16–CI$30. AE, MC, V. Daily 11am–3pm and 6–9:30pm. Bar daily 11:30am–midnight.

INEXPENSIVE

Aunt Sha's Kitchen ★ (Finds) CAYMANIAN/CHINESE This bright pink building lures you to its isolated location on the south side of Cayman Brac. While relaxing on the patio at high tide, you can often see sharks in the water. A local favorite, this place serves the food that islanders have eaten for decades. Try such classic dishes as turtle stew with rice and beans, homemade conch fritters, and Key lime pie. Other favorites include sweet-and-sour chicken with fried rice, and chicken or shrimp chop suey. We gravitate toward the catch of the day, perhaps king fish or mahimahi, which can be grilled or fried and topped with butter y onions and pepper. The prices are among the most affordable on the island. There's also a lively bar with a pool table (see "Cayman Brac After Dark," later in this chapter).

South Side. ✆ **345/948-1581.** Main courses CI$8.80– CI$12. AE, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–11pm.

La Esperanza Restaurant ★ (Finds) CAYMANIAN Islanders, who flock here, call this place "Bussy's" in honor of its likable owner, Bussy Dilbert, who is the island's most popular and beloved innkeeper. For a drink, a room, or a meal, many devotees of this place wouldn't go anywhere else. You're offered a choice of indoor or outdoor dining, and the restaurant is decorated with wood furnishings and pictures of nautical life and island memorabilia.

Bussy's jerk chicken is the best on the island and as zesty as any in Jamaica. Most dishes come with corn bread, rice, red beans, or fried

plantains. Fresh and locally caught mahimahi, king fish, or snapper appear frequently on the menu, and these catches of the day are served in a lemon sauce with sautéed vegetables. One of the island's best T-bones appears here with side dishes of your choice. Other delights include savory conch fritters; shrimp, lobster, or turtle dishes; and fish and chips. The Key lime pie is the eternal favorite.

In La Esperanza hotel (p. 162), Stake Bay. ✆ **345/984-0591.** www.laesperanza.net. Main courses CI$10–CI$17. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–2pm and 6–10pm.

Tropical Delight Restaurant CAYMANIAN One of the island's most authentic old restaurants, this place is popular with locals and draws an occasional visitor. It's most festive on Sunday when church groups in their "Sunday-go-to-meeting" clothes pour in for "a fill-up." The restaurant is housed in a wooden structure decorated with shipcarvings and pictures of Caymanian life. The cooks make the island's most savory kettle of turtle stew, served with rice, beans, potato salad, and coleslaw. You can also order such hearty fare as braised oxtail or roast beef in gravy with vegetables and rice. The choice selection is always the catch of the day—perhaps mahimahi, snapper, or kingfish—served fried or grilled.

West End. ✆ **345/948-1272.** Main courses CI$9–CI$12. No credit cards. Mon–Fri 7am–7pm; Sat–Sun 7am–10pm.

4 BEACHES, SCUBA DIVING & OTHER OUTDOOR PURSUITS

Come to Cayman Brac for spectacular outdoor activities rather than man-made attractions. Scuba divers flock here in droves, and everyone—from singles to families—loves the beaches.

THE BEACHES

Though Cayman Brac can hardly compete with Grand Cayman and its Seven Mile Beach, the beaches on Brac will satisfy most tastes, even if they're on a smaller scale.

Most of the beaches lie in the southwest, the northeast, and the northwest. The East End, where the cliffs of the Bluff meet the sea, is definitely not beach country.

The majority of visitors use the small beaches along the southwest coast because this is the site of such major resorts as Brac Reef. We've found that these beaches are better for sunning than snorkeling because of the huge outgrowth of turtle grass in the water.

Directly east of these resorts is the public beach, reached by heading east along South Side Road West. You'll find it to the immediate

Tips In Case of Inclement Weather: An Indoor Attraction

If it's raining outside (and even if it's not), history buffs might want to check out the **Cayman Brac Museum,** in the former Government Administration Building, Stake Bay (✆ **345/948-2622**), which has an interesting collection of Caymanian antiques, including pieces rescued from shipwrecks and objects from the 18th century. Hours are Monday to Friday from 9am to noon and 1 to 4pm, Saturday from 9am to noon. Admission is free, but donations are accepted.

south of marshes/wetlands. With its gentle rollers, the beach itself is quite beautiful, though the wire enclosure enveloping the picnic area is pretty unappealing. Public showers are here, but we've never known them to be in order (plus the water in the bathrooms has an unpleasant odor), and the toilets are foul. We suggest you do your showering elsewhere.

Many visitors opt to find their own small stretch of sand, particularly in the southwest area beyond Salt Water Pond. Another stretch of coastline is to the east at Hawksbill Bay.

Along the northern tier, the only stretch of coastline with a reef is to the west of Spot Bay, though strong currents on both the eastern and western tips of Cayman Brac make snorkeling a bit hazardous. It is also possible to snorkel at the wreck of the *Captain Keith Tibbetts* to the northwest (see below).

SCUBA DIVING

Because diving on Cayman Brac is rated as perhaps the best in the Caribbean, divers from all over the world, both experienced and beginner, come here. Seas are usually calm and the best dive sites lie only a 5- to 20-minute boat ride offshore.

In all, there are about 50 prime dive sites, geared to all different levels of divers. The most dramatic is the wreck of the frigate ***Captain Keith Tibbetts*** ★, which was deliberately sunk in September 1996 after being brought over from Cuba. This 99m (325-ft.) former Russian frigate, originally intended for the Cuban navy, lies 180m (591 ft.) offshore in northwest Cayman Brac, its bow resting in 34m (110 ft.) of water, the stern just 17m (55 ft.) below the surface. Divers can swim through its trio of upper decks, keeping company with everything from four-eyed butterflyfish to batfish.

Reef Divers, South Side (✆ **800/327-3835** or 345/948-1642; www.bracreef.com), is affiliated with the previously recommended Brac Reef Beach Resort (p. 158) and is the island's most visible and recommended dive operator. Divers' magazines consistently rate this outfitter as offering the best wall diving and wreck diving on Cayman Brac. Reef Divers' fleet of dive boats, with a complete inventory of tanks and scuba gear, ranges from 13 to 14m (42–46 ft.). A one-tank dive costs US$55, a two-tank dive US$85 to US$110, and a three-tank dive US$125. Snorkeling trips are also possible for US$20 for a half-day and US$30 for a full day. Rentals of wetsuits, masks, fins, and snorkeling equipment, among other gear, are available. After discussing your interests, the dive operator will guide you to dozens of different sites.

EXPLORING BY CAR

The Bluff ★ is the island's most distinctive geographic feature. As mentioned before, the Bluff is a soaring limestone plateau rising 42m (138 ft.) above the sea, covering much of the easternmost point of the island. To drive up the Bluff, take Ashton Reid Drive, the one paved road that leads to the summit. The panoramic view over the south side of the Bluff is well worth the journey. If you suffer from vertigo, know that it is a sheer drop to the sea below. Many people choose to hike up the Bluff (see "Hiking," below).

To get acquainted with the Brac version of Mother Nature, take one of the **guided nature tours** run by Cantrell Scott and Keino Daley, the government's tour guides. What they don't know about Cayman Brac isn't worth knowing. They can, for example, name all 50 to 60 species of birds that, at least for part of the year, land on Cayman Brac. Tours last about 3 hours and are free. Mr. Scott and Mr. Daley will join you in your car for the tour. Call ✆ **345/948-2651** to establish a meeting time and place.

FISHING

Fishing is another reason many visitors come to Cayman Brac: The fishing here rivals that on Little Cayman. Bonefishing inside the reef along the coast to the southwest is especially rewarding. Catches around the island include wahoo, sailfish, marlin, tuna, grouper, and snapper.

Indepth Watersports (✆ **866/476-2195** or 345/948-8037; www.indepthwatersports.com) has fishing charters for US$500 per half-day or US$1,000 for a full day for up to eight fishermen.

HIKING

Hiking is becoming more and more popular on Cayman Brac, enough so that the **Cayman Brac Tourist Office** (p. 156) now has

free printed guides to the best hikes on the island. Trails, though not always well maintained, are indicated by white "heritage markers." In all, some three dozen marked trails wind their way across the island. Some are easy to reach and hike, while others require more skill and experience. The following recommended hikes are moderately difficult.

Some of our favorite trails include **West End Point Overlook,** starting on South Side Road, west of the Brac Reef Beach Resort. At the far western point of Brac is an idyllic hike for bird-watching. Islanders also claim, and with good reason, that you have the best view of sunsets here. Locals watch for the "green flash" of light as the sun goes down.

Another good trail to follow is **Westerly Ponds,** South Side Road, across from the Brac Reef Beach Resort (p. 158). The two ponds along this trail are the best spots for observing the life of wetland fowl. Boardwalks cut across the marshes, with small viewing sections.

The Lighthouse Trail ★, taking 3 hours, starts at Spot Bay in the far East End of the island. You'll approach the beginning of the trail by walking along Spot Bay Road, then follow the trail up the northeast face of the Bluff. On the way, you'll pass the entrance to Peter's Cave, used in olden days as a hurricane shelter. As you continue hiking, you will come to a spot dubbed Peter's Outlook by locals, with a panoramic sweep across Spot Bay. Two lighthouses are in this area, one modern and the other from the 1930s.

The best nature trail on Brac is the **Parrot Reserve** ★★ in the center of the island, which is perfect for self-guided tours. The trail meanders for 1.6km (1 mile), taking hikers through the heart of the reserve, which is a visitor's best chance to see the endangered Cayman Brac parrot. Trails are always open and there's no fee to enter. You must, of course, bring your own provisions, including plenty of water. This preserve is reached along Major Donald Drive (sometimes called Lighthouse Rd.), a 9.7km (6-mile) dirt road leading to cliffs. From this vantage point on the Bluff, the best view of North East Point is spread before you. Many hikers come here to take in the most dramatic sunrise in the Cayman Islands.

SPELUNKING

Cayman Brac has a series of caves that are open for exploring. **Peter's Cave,** on the Lighthouse Trail in the East End, is mammoth, with tunnels leading off in several directions. **Rebecca's Cave** lies off South Side Road, near the Carib Sands Beach Resort (p. 161), and is well marked. It's the best known of Brac's caves, and takes its name from a young child who died here during the disastrous hurricane of 1932 that destroyed the island. Rebecca's tomb can still be seen in the middle of the cave.

Did You Know?

- The green sea turtle can survive underwater for days at a time?
- The Cayman Trough, between the Caymans and Jamaica, contains the deepest waters in the Caribbean, reaching depths of 4 miles or more.
- Fire coral will actually defend itself and attack you. You'll feel like a match has been put to your body.
- A peg-legged, swashbuckling turtle is the national symbol of the Cayman Islands, a sort of mascot.
- Caymanians refused to become a protectorate of Jamaica when that island country achieved independence in 1962.
- Agouti, rabbit-sized rodents, still live on the island. Cayman residents once hunted them for meat.
- Only one egg out of 10,000 laid by the green sea turtle reaches maturity.
- More than 100 nationalities, one-fifth from Jamaica, live on the Cayman Islands.
- The first settlers on the Caymans may have been deserters from the British army in Jamaica.
- Caymanians have one of the highest standards of living in the Caribbean.
- The root cassava was used by the Taíno Indians to make flour, and Caymanians use it today to make a local dessert called "heavy cake." But it is poisonous until processed to remove its prussic acid.
- In the summer months, Texans and many Southerners flee to the Caymans to beat the heat.

Bat Cave takes its name from its inhabitants, several species of which can be seen hanging from above if you shine your flashlight up to the roof. Most of the bats you'll see here are Jamaican fruit bats. The bats emerge in the evening to fly about, usually after 9pm. Bat Cave is on the south side of the island and is marked by signs.

A final cave, **Great Cave,** stands a mile or so from the lighthouse that designates the easternmost point of the island, at the top of the Bluff. Filled with stalagmites and stalactites, it is one of the most interesting caves to explore, although a bit eerie. The terrain is dry and rocky, with plenty of sharp, loose rocks. Wear long pants and sturdy shoes, preferably with ankle supports, for scrabbling around underground.

TENNIS

The best tennis court on the island is found at the previously recommended **Brac Reef Beach Resort,** South Side (p. 158; ✆ **345/948-1323**). The court is open to nonguests at the cost of CI$6.25 per day. The court is open daily and is also lit for night play.

5 SHOPPING

There isn't much here in the way of shopping. The best shop for souvenirs (T-shirts, etc.) is **Treasure Chest,** Tibbetts Square (✆ **345/948-1333**), which is a relatively easy walk from the airport landing strip. It's open Monday to Saturday from 9am to 5pm.

If you're staying at one of the resorts along the north shore, the **Bayside Grocery,** at La Esperanza, Stake Bay (✆ **345/948-0531**), is sure to come in handy, especially if you're in a self-catering villa. Onsite is a grocery store plus a general merchandise mart, an electronics store, and a souvenir section.

Kirk Freeport, Kirk Freeport Plaza, Stake Bay (✆ **345/948-2612**), is a small shop with a surprisingly wide range of merchandise, featuring everything from elegant coral items to china, jewelry, glassware, silver, and gold items, along with T-shirts and casual sports clothing. It's the best place for upmarket gifts on the island. It's open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 6pm.

The best place on the island to purchase liquor is **Brac Freeport,** West End (✆ **345/948-1332**), which is open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 7pm.

Sharon's Hair Clinic, Tibbetts Square (✆ **345/948-1387**), is the place to go for hair care. The salon is especially adept at braiding and is open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 7pm.

6 CAYMAN BRAC AFTER DARK

Most visitors and islanders view hanging out at a bar and having dinner as an evening unto itself. Most travelers hit the sack early, preparing for their next day's adventure early in the morning. Don't expect the late-night festivities to go much past midnight.

Except on the slowest of evenings, there's usually one spot that's hotter than any other because it's featuring a DJ or live band. The venues vary, but your hotel staff will usually know where to direct you to find the evening's best entertainment.

On Friday and Saturday nights, **Aunt Sha's Kitchen,** South Side (p. 164; ✆ **345/948-1581**), turns into an island social center with music (mostly reggae and soca) supplied by a DJ and an occasional happy hour.

Live music is often featured at the **Bar at Brac Reef Beach Resort,** South Side (p. 158; ✆ **345/948-1323**)—one of the island's most popular bars, especially with visitors. Monday night is the manager's party, Wednesday night is karaoke night, and Thursday is movie night. Nonguests are always welcome. It's open from 11am to 1am daily.

Coral Isle Club, South Side, east of Denis Point (✆ **345/948-1581**), is the island's top karaoke bar, with a DJ on Wednesday through Saturday nights. The bartender's specialty is a Blue Lagoon, costing CI$5 and made with tequila and vodka. The bar is open daily from 7:30am to 11pm.

For a good time on Friday and Saturday nights, join the islanders filing into the previously recommended hotel, restaurant, and bar **La Esperanza,** Stake Bay (p. 162; ✆ **345/948-0531**). Dig into mounds of barbecue or jerk chicken prepared by the owner himself, Bussy, and enjoy the island band that often plays on Friday and Saturday nights. On other nights, a blaring jukebox is responsible for the music, which can range from top tunes of the 1940s to calypso. The inside lounge has a full bar, TV, pool tables, and a seaside ambience. It's open daily from 9am to 1am.

10 Little Cayman

The smallest of the Cayman Islands, cigar-shaped Little Cayman has only about 130 permanent inhabitants, so nearly everybody you'll see will be a visitor, most often from the United States. Little Cayman is 16km (10 miles) long and about 1.6km (a mile) wide at its broadest point. Electricity didn't make it here until 1990, and phone service didn't arrive until 1991. Little Cayman lies about 109km (68 miles) northeast of Grand Cayman and some 8km (5 miles) from Cayman Brac. The entire island is coral and sand. **Blossom Village,** the island's "capital," is on the southwest coast.

The Cayman Islands archipelago is made up of mountaintops of the long-submerged Sierra Maestra Range, which runs north into Cuba. Coral once formed in layers over the underwater peaks, eventually creating the islands. Beneath Little Cayman's Bloody Bay is one of the mountain's walls—a stunning sight for snorkelers and scuba divers.

Little Cayman seems to have come into its own now that fishing and diving have taken center stage; the island is a near-perfect place for these pursuits. The late Jacques Cousteau hailed the waters around the little island as one of the three finest diving spots in the world. The flats on Little Cayman are said to have the best bonefishing in the world, and a brackish inland pool can be fished for tarpon. Even if you don't dive or fish, you can row 180m (591 ft.) off Little Cayman to isolated and uninhabited Owen Island, where you can swim at the sandy beach and picnic by a blue lagoon.

Pirate treasure may still be buried on the island, but it's in the dense interior of what is now the largest bird sanctuary in the Caribbean. Little Cayman also has the largest population of rock iguanas in the entire Caribbean (you will surely spot them) and is home to one of the oldest species of reptiles in the New World—the tree-climbing *Anulis maynardi* (which is not known by any other name). This rare lizard is difficult to spot because the females are green and the males are brown, and, as such, they blend into local vegetation. Keep your eyes open for them!

1 ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION

Little Cayman is too small to have a tourist office. Before you go, you can visit the tourist office in George Town (p. 190) and pick up what limited information is available.

GETTING THERE

Most visitors fly from Grand Cayman to Little Cayman aboard any of the several daily flights operated by Cayman Express, a subdivision of **Cayman Airways** (✆ **800/422-9626** in the U.S. and Canada, or 345/949-8200; www.caymanairways.com), the national carrier. The cost of round-trip passage aboard any of its 18-seater planes is US$132 to US$157. Luggage is limited, without payment of an additional surcharge, to two suitcases per person, totaling no more than 55 pounds for both bags, so it's wise to pack light. Airplanes only land and take off on Little Cayman during daylight hours.

GETTING AROUND

You can get around this small island four ways: You can use your feet, rent a jeep, hire a bike, or go on an organized tour. If you make arrangements in advance, your hotel will often send a van to meet your plane.

Car Rentals

The island's only car rental outlet is **McLaughlin Enterprises,** Blossom Village (✆ **345/948-1000**). Its office, located in a small shopping strip, is clearly visible from the airstrip and within easy walking distance. You can also call the company through an airport courtesy phone and ask them to pick you up. Rates begin at CI$65 per day, with a second driver costing another CI$14. The insurance charge is CI$16 per day. McLaughlin is open Monday to Saturday 8am to 6pm, and Sunday 8am to noon and 3 to 5pm.

Fun Facts **Road Rules: Iguanas Have Right of Way**

One local rule to remember is that the prehistoric-looking gray iguana is the king of the road and always has the right of way should he want to make a leisurely crossing.

The speed limit for the whole island is 40kmph (25 mph). The only places to get fuel are near McLaughlin and on the north side of the island at Sam McCoy's. Since the cars are not four-wheel-drive, avoid driving on soft sands.

Bicycles

Little Cayman is too small to support a bike rental shop. The good news is that most of the hotels and little guesthouses will either lend you one (most often the case) or rent you one. There's little traffic, the land is flat, and it's relatively easy to cycle along the paved roads. Just avoid the East End; the unpaved roads here cause a very bumpy, uncomfortable ride. Drifting sand is also a menace.

Fast Facts Little Cayman

Banks Little Cayman has **no ATMs.** The **Cayman National Bank,** Little Cayman Mall (✆ **345/948-1551**), is open Monday and Thursday only from 9am to 2:30pm.

Emergencies Dial ✆ **911.** There's only one police officer on the island.

Hospitals & Clinics A nurse is based at the **Little Cayman Clinic,** Blossom Avenue on Guy Banks Road, in Blossom Village (✆ **345/948-0072**). Hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 9am to 1pm; Tuesday and Thursday 1 to 5pm. In an emergency, the nurse can be contacted off-hours at ✆ **345/948-1073.** The nearest hospital is the **Faith Hospital** on Cayman Brac (✆ **345/948-2225**), to which patients on Little Cayman are airlifted in an emergency. Should there be a scuba-diving accident with a need for decompression, the patient is airlifted at once to Grand Cayman.

Internet Access Your hotel may have Internet access.

Pharmacies A small pharmacy is located at **Little Cayman Clinic** (see "Hospital & Clinics," above).

Post Office **The Little Cayman Post Office** (✆ **345/948-0016**) is easily spotted near the airfield on the southwest side of Little Cayman. It's open Monday to Thursday 9 to 11:30am and 1 to 3pm, Friday 9 to 11:30am and 1 to 3:30pm.

Water If your hotel relies on rainwater collected in cisterns, it's best to drink bottled water. Ask about the water source when you reserve. Also, drink bottled water when dining out at restaurants.

2 WHERE TO STAY

EXPENSIVE

The Club at Little Cayman ★★ Set on lushly landscaped grounds, this complex affords the most luxurious living on Little Cayman. It's a pocket of posh, boasting elegantly furnished luxury villas that you'd expect to spot along Florida's Gold Coast. For that matter, we prefer this resort over the Conch Club. The Club opens onto one of the most magnificent beaches on the island. Villas, which are located in a setting of coconut trees and flowering plants, boast oversize balconies or porches. The pool is our favorite on the island, custom-designed with bench seating and waterfalls. The one-, two-, and three-bedroom rentals have glamorous architectural touches, including crown-molding trim and ceramic tiles. High-quality furnishings and luxury fabrics add to the allure. The in-room kitchens are the best on the island, with such features as a glass-top range. If you tire of cooking inside, you can take advantage of the barbecue area outside. Guests at the club can use the amenities of the Little Cayman Beach Resort (see below).

Guy Banks Rd., Little Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **345/948-1033.** Fax 345/948-1040. www.theclubatlittlecayman.com. 40 units. Winter US$310 1-bedroom, US$430 2-bedroom, US$500–$550 3-bedroom; off season US$248 1-bedroom, US$330 2-bedroom, US$400–US$450 3-bedroom. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Jacuzzi; outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchen.

Conch Club Condominiums (Kids) One of the island's most modern developments, and a great choice for families or small groups, this complex has two- and three-bedroom self-catering condos opening onto secluded South Hole Sound's white sand beaches. The condominiums are affiliated with Little Cayman Beach Resort (see below), so guests have use of all of the resort's facilities and amenities. The attractively furnished, bright, and airy accommodations each boast a patio and a seafront balcony. Guests can check into a two-bedroom condo with two-and-a-half bathrooms or a three-bedroom condo with three bathrooms. All rentals come with a fully equipped kitchen.

Outside, you'll find two private freshwater pools with large outdoor deck areas. Rare for these sibling islands of Grand Cayman, a fully equipped fitness center and a health and beauty center are also on-site. The complex has an on-site dive operation.

Guy Banks Rd., Little Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **888/756-7400** in the U.S., or 345/948-1033. Fax 345/948-1040. www.conchclub.com. 20 units. Winter US$350 2-bedroom, US$450 3-bedroom; off season US$250 2-bedroom, US$350 3-bedroom. Extra person US$50. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant, bar; exercise room; Jacuzzi; 2 outdoor pools; tennis court (lit); watersports equipment/rentals. *In room:* A/C, ceiling fans, TV.

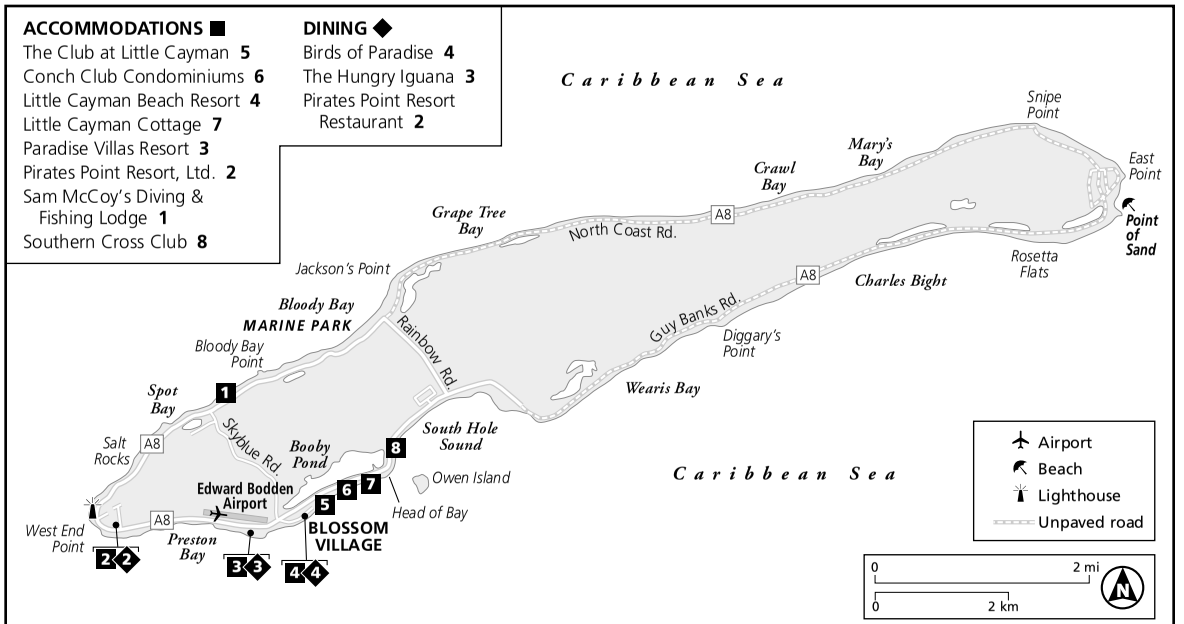
Little Cayman Beach Resort ★★ Set on the south coast, this resort was enlarged and renovated in 2008. It's close to many of the island's diving and sporting attractions, including the South Hole Sound Lagoon's bonefishing. It's popular with anglers, divers, birdwatchers, and adventurous types. The hotel lies only 1.5km (1 mile) from the Edward Bodden Airport and it has a white sand beach fringing a shallow, reef-protected bay. It is divided into three pastel, coral-colored, two-story buildings with gingerbread trim. The most desirable units are the 12 oceanfront rooms. Each unit has a harmonious color scheme and an inviting, airy atmosphere. The resort has been much improved, with a superior dive shop and a collection of Hobie cats and kayaks.

Blossom Village, Little Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **800/327-3835** in the U.S. and Canada, or 345/948-1033. Fax 345/948-1040. www.littlecayman.com. 40 units. Winter US$523–US$661 for nondiver, US$723–US$861 for diver; off season US$450–US$497 for nondiver, US$650–US$697 for diver. Rates are per person and include a stay of 3 nights with breakfast and dinner; diver rates include three one-tank dives per day. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant, bar; babysitting; bikes; health club & spa; watersports equipment/rentals. *In room:* A/C, ceiling fan, TV, hair dryer, kitchenette.

Little Cayman Cottage ★ (Finds) This cottage, located about 1.6km (1 mile) from the airport, is the type of hideaway where you could write the great American novel. The cottage is set among seagrape and swaying palm trees, with a view of a white sand beach—a cliché of Caribbean charm and style. You can spend the entire day lying in the hammock or you can actively pursue various watersports. Six people are accommodated comfortably in the single one-floor villa, which has tiled floors and rattan furnishings. The two midsize bedrooms are furnished in a light, breezy style. Bedroom areas feature two twin beds, a king-size bed, and a convertible queen-size couch. The cottage also has a living and dining area and a fully equipped kitchen with a screened porch, plus a grill for barbecuing and two bicycles.

117 Airport Rd., Little Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **800/235-5888** or 345/945-4144. Fax 345/949-7471. www.caymanvillas.com. 1 2-bedroom cottage. Winter US$325–US$400; off season US$225–US$300. MC, V. **Amenities:** Babysitting; bikes. *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchen, no phone.

Pirates Point Resort, Ltd. ★ For watersports or just relaxing, this resort near West End Point provides a family environment with gourmet cuisine, although it's a notch down from Little Cayman Beach Resort. The place has remodeled rooms, and a non-air-conditioned family cottage with two large rooms. In addition, it has four seaside cottages, with balconies overlooking Preston Bay. The resort's packages include a room, three excellent meals per day with appropriate wines and all alcoholic beverages, and two-tank boat dives daily,


ACCOMMODATIONS ■
The Club at Little Cayman 5
Conch Club Condominiums 6
Little Cayman Beach Resort 4
Little Cayman Cottage 7
Paradise Villas Resort 3
Pirates Point Resort, Ltd. 2
Sam McCoy's Diving & Fishing Lodge 1
Southern Cross Club 8
DINING ◆
Birds of Paradise 4
The Hungry Iguana 3
Pirates Point Resort Restaurant 2
Caribbean Sea
Snipe Point
Mary's Bay
Crawl Bay
East Point
Point of Sand
Grape Tree Bay
North Coast Rd.
A8
Jackson's Point
Rosetta Flats
Charles Bight
Bloody Bay
MARINE PARK
Bloody Bay Point
Rainbow Rd.
Guy Banks Rd.
Diggary's Point
Spot Bay
Wearis Bay
Salt Rocks
Skyblue Rd.
Booby Pond
South Hole Sound
Owen Island
Edward Bodden Airport
Head of Bay
West End Point
Preston Bay
BLOSSOM VILLAGE
Airport
Beach
Lighthouse
Unpaved road
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2 mi
0
2 km
N

 featuring tours of the Bloody Bay Wall and Jackson Reef. Other activities include snorkeling, bird-watching, and exploring.

The food is excellent. The owner and manager, Texas-born Gladys Howard, is an award-winning cookbook author and a graduate of Cordon Bleu in Paris. She has studied with such stars as Julia Child, Jacques Pepin, and James Beard. She uses fresh fruits and vegetables grown locally, as well as local seafood.

Preston Bay, Little Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **345/948-1010.** Fax 345/948-1011. www.piratespointresort.com. 11 units. Winter US$1,595 per person 7-day nondiver package, US$1,995 per person 7-day dive package; off season US$1,495 7-day nondiver package, US$1,795 per person 7-day dive package. Children 5–12 stay free in parent's room. MC, V. No children 4 or under. **Amenities:** Restaurant, bar; outdoor pool; watersports equipment/rentals. *In room:* A/C (in some), no phone.

MODERATE

Paradise Villas Resort ★ (Kids) On high-priced Little Cayman, this resort on the beach is the best deal—especially if you're traveling with your family, as babysitting can be arranged. The style is typically Caymanian, with gingerbread decoration, metal roofs, and porches in the front and back. The resort consists of six duplex cottages that border the sea; each cottage is divided into two one-bedroom units with small but comfortable rooms. Pullout couches in the living room easily accommodate extra guests. The compact bathrooms contain shower stalls. Guests prepare their own meals in a kitchenette. The resort is on the island's south side, near the little airport, and pickup is provided free. The resort also rents cars to guests, although a grocery store, boutique, and liquor store are all within walking distance, and the resort provides free bikes. On the premises is the best affordable restaurant on the island, **The Hungry Iguana** (p. 180).

At Edward Bodden Airport (P.O. Box 48), Little Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **877/3-CAYMAN** (322-9626), or 345/948-0001. Fax 345/948-0002. www.paradisevillas.com. 12 units. Winter US$195 double, US$210 triple; off season US$175 double, US$190 triple. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. Dive packages available. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant, bar; free airport transfers; bikes. *In room:* A/C, ceiling fans, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

Sam McCoy's Diving & Fishing Lodge Set on the island's northwestern shore, this all-inclusive hotel reflects the personalities of Sam McCoy and his family, who include their guests in many aspects of their day-to-day lives. You won't really find a bar or restaurant in the traditional sense here; rather, you'll pour your own drinks (usually from your own bottle) or drink at a beach bar that rises from the sands of Bloody Bay, a short walk from the hotel. Light snacks and simple platters are served at outdoor tables near the main lodge with Sam and his gang, many of whom are associated in one way or another with diving operations to the reefs offshore. The bedrooms

are ultra-simple, with few adornments other than beds with firm mattresses, a table and chair, and a ceiling fan. There's a pool on the premises, but most visitors opt for dips in the wide blue sea instead, usually taking part in any of the scuba explorations led by Sam and his staff. Picnics can be arranged on the offshore sands of Owens Cay. This is a place built by divers and intended for divers, even those with children in tow.

643 N. Coast Rd. (P.O. Box 12), Little Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **866/978-5904** in the U.S. and Canada, or 345/948-0104. Fax 345/948-0057. www.mccoyslodge.com.ky. 8 units. Winter US$440 double; off season US$360 double 75% discount for children ages 3–12. Rates include all meals and dives. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Bar; babysitting; outdoor pool; watersports equipment/rentals. *In room:* A/C.

Southern Cross Club ★ Opened in 1959, this was the first resort ever on Little Cayman. The inn, which attracts divers and fishermen, must be doing something right, considering that two-thirds of the patrons are repeat customers—the highest such rate anywhere in the Cayman Islands. On the southern side of Little Cayman, the resort lies to the southeast of Booby Pond, opening onto Head O' Bay, with the offshore Owen Island clearly visible. The Southern Cross is named after the constellation, which can be seen here on a clear winter's night.

The rooms open onto 240m (787 ft.) of golden sands. Accommodations are in comfortably furnished one-bedroom cottages, with one unit containing two bedrooms. Bedrooms are decorated in a simple Caribbean style, and each has a sitting room and a small bathroom. This resort is among the very best for fishing, with two boats—one deep-sea, one flat—for deep-sea fishing or fishing in the lake. No more than 12 divers go out at one time in the resort's dive boat. Bikes and kayaks are provided free. Hotel guests, islanders, and visitors patronize the restaurant and bar, making this one of Little Cayman's few nightlife spots (p. 185).

South Hole Sound (P.O. Box 44), Little Cayman, B.W.I. ✆ **800/899-2582** in the U.S., or 619/563-0017. Fax 619/563-1665. www.southerncrossclub.com. 10 units. Winter US$1,645 per person; off season US$1,390 per person. Rates include room and all meals for 5 nights. AE, DISC, MC, V. No children 4 or under. **Amenities:** Restaurant, bar; outdoor pool; watersports equipment/rentals; Wi-Fi (free in clubhouse). *In room:* A/C, no phone.

3 WHERE TO DINE

Birds of Paradise AMERICAN/CONTINENTAL This spot caters primarily to Little Cayman Beach Resort (p. 176) guests, but welcomes anyone. The specialty is buffet-style dinners—the kind

your parents might have enjoyed back in the 1950s or 1960s. Saturday night features the island's most generous barbecue spread—all the ribs, fish, and Jamaican-style jerk chicken you'd want. On other nights, try the prime rib, fresh fish Caribbean style (your best bet), or chicken (either Kiev or *cordon bleu*). There's a freshly made salad bar, and homemade desserts are yummy, especially the Key lime pie. At night, opt for an outdoor table under the stars.

At Little Cayman Beach Resort. ✆ **345/948-1033.** Reservations recommended for dinner for nonguests. Breakfast CI$12; lunch CI$17; dinner CI$35. AE, MC, V. Daily 7–8:30am, 12:30–1:30pm, and 6:30–8pm.

The Hungry Iguana AMERICAN/CARIBBEAN At the beach, you'll spot the mammoth iguana mural that marks this place immediately. The island's tastiest dishes are served here, a winning combination of standard American fare and some zesty flavors from islands to the south. It's the rowdiest place on Little Cayman, especially the sports bar with its satellite TV in the corner, a sort of T.G.I. Friday's atmosphere. Lunch is the usual burgers and fries along with some well-stuffed sandwiches. We prefer the grilled chicken salad. Dinner gets a little more elaborate—there's usually a special meat dish of the day, depending on the market (supplies are shipped in once a week by barge). The chef always seems willing to prepare a steak as you like it. Marinated conch with homemade chips is another tasty choice.

At Paradise Villas Resort (p. 178). ✆ **345/948-0007.** Reservations recommended. Main courses lunch CI$7–CI$16, dinner CI$15–CI$35. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 5:30–9pm. Bar Mon–Fri noon–1am; Sat–Sun noon–midnight.

Pirates Point Resort Restaurant ★ INTERNATIONAL The cuisine here is the island's best, as the owner and manager, Gladys Howard, is a graduate of Cordon Bleu in Paris and has studied with such culinary stars as Julia Child and James Beard. Howard has even written several cookbooks of her own. She uses fresh fruits and local vegetables, as well as seafood caught in local waters. She imports as little as possible. The menu changes, but some of its most memorable dishes include a zesty conch and a saffron scallop couscous. Ever had a smoked-salmon cheesecake with a green-onion coulis? Try it. We think you'll like it. Two of the best dishes we've sampled here are the macadamia-crusted mahimahi in a lemon-dill sauce, and the herb-roasted leg of lamb with a burgundy demi-glacé. Desserts are luscious, including a four-layer chocolate cake and a white-chocolate tropical torte.

At Pirates Point Resort (p. 176). ✆ **345/948-1010.** Reservations required 24 hr. in advance for nonguests. 2-course fixed-price menu CI$50, including wine and pickup and return to your hotel. MC, V. Daily 1:45–2:30pm and 7:30pm (1 seating).

4 BEACHES, SCUBA DIVING & OTHER OUTDOOR PURSUITS

Visit Little Cayman for the diving, fishing, and beaches, not for the sightseeing, although there are a few sights to see.

Little Cayman has long been popular with birders and anglers, but scuba diving is its main allure. Some 60 dive sites—marked with moorings—are found along this 16km (10-mile) island. The most celebrated site is Bloody Bay Wall (see below) on the northern tier of the island.

THE BEACHES

Point of Sand ★ is our favorite beach on the island, located at the very southeastern tip of Little Cayman and accessible from Blossom Village by heading east along Guy Banks Road. Point of Sand is also great for snorkeling and the sand here is luminescent pink. On most weekdays, you'll have the beach to yourself, although many visitors come over on Saturday and Sunday from Cayman Brac. Plan to take a picnic lunch and enjoy it at a covered picnic table. You'll find bathrooms and changing facilities here. It's dangerous to attempt to take a jeep down to the beach because you might get stuck in the deep sands. Park it at the lot and walk down to the beach.

Owen Island ★ lies off the southwestern coast, east of Blossom Village and South Town, in South Hole Sound, which is between Booby Pond and Tarpon Lake. The island—which features a beautiful sand beach—is an easy 180m (590-ft.) rowboat ride off the coast. Plan to pack a picnic lunch and make a day of it. Owen Island—locals call it "the Cay"—is the four th-largest island in the Cayman archipelago, yet it consists of only 4.4 hectares (11 acres). It's an idyllic spot with trees and plenty of sand, plus gulls and migrant waders in its shallow waters and flats. Many resorts on Little Cayman schedule picnic trips to this secluded island. The snorkeling is especially good on the south side. Many visitors rent a kayak at Little Cayman Beach Resort (p. 176) and spend a day here, which could be as close as you'll get to living a Robinson Crusoe existence.

SCUBA DIVING & SNORKELING

One of the most spectacular and most varied dive locations in the world is **Bloody Bay Marine Park** ★★★, reached along North Coast Road and lying between Sam McCoy's Diving & Fishing Lodge (p. 178) in the west and Jackson Point to the northeast. To the east is Jackson Wall, with the Bloody Bay Wall lying to the west. A total of 22 listed dive sites are found in this park alone. The snorkeling here is also very rewarding.

The drop at Bloody Bay begins at only 6m (20 ft.), but soon plunges to more than 360m (1,181 ft.). At one point, the reefs plummet to 1,800m (5,904 ft.). ***Note:*** We strongly suggest that you explore the dive sites with one of the experienced dive operators recommended below.

Conch Club Divers is based at the previously recommended Conch Club Condominiums, Guy Banks Road (p. 175; ✆ **888/756-7400** or 345/948-1033; www.conchclub.com). These experts offer everything from relaxing snorkeling tours to advanced diving courses. The outfitter's 42-foot boat, *Sea-esta,* takes customized dive excursions to the area's major dive sites, including Bloody Bay Wall. A one-tank dive costs CI$55, a two-tank dive is CI$85, and a three-tank dive goes for CI$120. Snorkeling gear costs CI$15 for a day's rental. The full PADI certification course costs CI$350, and a resort course is CI$150.

Paradise Divers is installed at another previously recommended resort, Paradise Villas Resort, at Edward Bodden Airport (p. 178; ✆ **345/948-0001;** www.paradise-divers.com). Like all the other dive outfitters, it provides PADI and NAUI certification courses. Prices are quoted in U.S. dollars, with a single dive going for US$60 or a two-tank dive for US$95. Night dives cost US$60, with snorkeling trips priced at US$20.

Reef Divers at Little Cayman Beach Resort, Guy Banks Road in Blossom Village (p. 176; ✆ **800/327-3835** or 345/948-1033; www.littlecayman.com), was established in 1993. It has a trio of 13m (43-ft.) boats and all the latest equipment. On-site is a dive shop, and the staff here gives PADI courses. Certified divers are charged CI$75 per tank dive. Kayak rentals are also available.

Southern Cross Club, South Hole Sound (p. 179; ✆ **345/948-1099;** www.southerncrossclub.com), is another one of the island's leading dive outfitters, providing an intimate dive with no more than a dozen divers per boat. This outfitter has all the latest equipment and is very experienced at directing divers to some of the most dramatic offshore dive sites. A two-tank dive costs CI$95, a three-tank dive CI$160, and night dives CI$75. Snorkeling trips cost CI$15.

FISHING

Little Cayman is recognized as the best island to fish year-round for tarpon, bonefish, and permit (a type of pompano fish).

Anglers can catch bonefish averaging 1.3 to 2.7kg (3–6 lb.) in the shallow areas of South Hole Sound near Owen Island. Bonefish can be spotted in areas known as "muds," or patches of water where the sea looks milky because of fish churning up the bottom while feeding. Muds are especially visible from the air on approach to the island.

Many guides use fry (young fish) rather than flies for bonefish. Anglers who want to try fly-fishing should bring their own tackle. (In a pinch, **Sam McCoy's Diving & Fishing Lodge,** p. 178, may be able to set you up with fly-fishing gear, but we're not making any promises.) South Hole Sound provides the best action. Although these fish bite all day, local guides agree that finding bonefish depends on tides and weather conditions. They often prefer to fish from the beach rather than stalk fish in the mud of the lagoon.

Tarpon are plentiful in Tarpon Lake, the landlocked, brackish natural pond that offers excellent action for fly-fishermen. These fish used to grow no larger than 1.8 to 3.6kg (4–8 lb.), but larger specimens (up to 9kg/20 lb.) are now caught frequently, especially in the early morning and late afternoon.

Permit of 6.8 to 15.9kg (15–35 lb) frequent Little Cayman waters, and may be the Cayman Islands' best-kept secret. Schools are especially abundant on Little Cayman's southeast end and in the flats of the northwest coast.

Although Little Cayman has good deep-sea fishing, its main attraction is light tackle and fly-fishing, and the island is best prepared to accommodate anglers. **McCoy's Lodge** (p. 178) and the **Southern Cross Club** (p. 179) cater to both divers and light-tackle fishing enthusiasts. Anglers can also be accommodated on day trips with advance reservations. Light tackle gear is available, but anglers should bring their own fly-fishing equipment. Contact the hotels directly to arrange fishing excursions and to confirm the availability of experienced local guides for the duration of the visit.

In addition to these previously recommended resorts, we also recommend **LCB Tours** (✆ **800/327-3835** in the U.S., or 345/948-1033). A full day of bonefishing costs CI$400 and a half-day is CI$230. A full day of deep-sea fishing costs CI$800 and a half-day is CI$450. The charters have a three-person maximum.

KAYAKING

Several resorts rent kayaks, which are especially useful in getting to Owen Island (see above), notably **Little Cayman Beach Resort** (p. 176). Nonguests can hire kayaks here for CI$16 per half-day for a single or CI$24 per half-day for a two-person kayak.

TENNIS

The best court is at the **Little Cayman Beach Resort** (p. 176), and is open daily from 6am to 10pm to guests and nonguests. The charge is CI$5 per game. The sun is often fierce for most of the year, so the best times for games are in the early morning or after 4pm. The court is lit so you can play after dark.

Birders flock to the **Booby Pond Visitor's Centre** (✆ **345/948-1010;** www.nationaltrust.org.ky/info/boobypond.html), which is operated by the National Trust. The visitor center is located in an 83-hectare (213-acre) nature reserve and has exhibits on Little Cayman's indigenous species, including the common crab and the seed shrimp. For a closer view of bird life, take a look through one of the two telescopes on the visitor center's porch. A gift shop here sells locally made crafts and island art. Admission is free and the center is open daily from 9am to 6pm.

Booby Pond ★★ itself is a 1.9km-long (1 1/2-mile) brackish mangrove pond, home to a breeding colony of splendid frigate birds. The red-footed boobies who live at this pond are the Caribbean's largest booby breeding colony. Estimates say that some 7,000 feathered creatures of different types call this pond home, including the black-necked stilt, the West Indian whistling duck, the graceful egret, the heron, and, of course, the booby.

Of minor interest is **Little Cayman Museum,** Guy Banks Road, Blossom Village (✆ **345/948-1033**), open Monday to Friday 3 to 5pm. It's free, although the staff will request a donation. In a green-and-white building with a wood veranda, the museum contains relics from Little Cayman's past. Some of the memorabilia date back a century and a half. The collection stemmed from the private treasures of Linton Tibbetts, an islander who sailed to the United States with US$50 in his pocket and returned to Little Cayman a multimillionaire. Everything from the attics of Little Cayman is here, including grandmother's old sewing machine.

Since getting around Little Cayman might be difficult, you may want to take an organized tour. **LCB Tours,** Blossom Village (✆ **800/327-3835** in the U.S., or 345/948-1033), offers a guided tour that visits all of the island highlights for CI$20 per person, with lunch costing an extra CI$16. You can also rent snorkeling gear, kayaks, sailboats, pedal boats, and surfbikes (which are basically floating bicycles).

The previously recommended **Little Cayman Beach Resort** (p. 176) offers snorkeling and bus tours of the island for CI$25 per person. The best tours, however, are the guided nature hikes conducted by Gladys Howard, owner of **Pirates Point Resort** (p. 176). These tours are sponsored by the National Trust, and only a CI$1 donation is asked. These tours can only be arranged by appointment.

6 SHOPPING

Shopaholics be warned: It's slim pickings on Little Cayman. At some point, all visitors seem to stop in at **Village Square,** Guy Banks Road (✆ **345/948-1069**), which sells a little bit of everything. Villa owners come here for supplies, groceries, and hardware. You can purchase fishing gear, household goods, film, newspapers, and magazines. You can even rent movies. Prices are high because everything has to be shipped in by boat. It's open Monday to Saturday from 8:30am to 6pm.

Nature Spa Health & Beauty, at the Little Cayman Beach Resort (p. 176), provides a full range of services, including massage, pedicures, facials, manicures, and hairdressing, plus beauty supplies. The spa is open daily from 11am to 6pm and requires an appointment.

Reef Photo & Video Centre, also at the Little Cayman Beach Resort (p. 176), provides daily film processing, and underwater video and camera rentals cost CI$9.60 per half-day. It's open daily from 7:30am to 5pm.

7 LITTLE CAYMAN AFTER DARK

Nightlife in Little Cayman usually means hanging out in a bar and ordering dinner. We like to go to **Sam McCoy's Diving & Fishing Lodge,** 643 North Coast Rd. (p. 178). The best time to go is for the Saturday-night barbecue at 7pm, costing CI$12 per person. The bar is open daily from 1pm to 1am.

Friday night at 7pm is the best time to hit the **Southern Cross Club,** South Hole Sound (p. 179), when it stages barbecues, held at the poolside deck near the beach and costing CI$14 per person. There's no live entertainment, but locals, expats, and visitors gather at the bar here daily from 11am to midnight.

11 Fast Facts

1 FAST FACTS: CAYMAN ISLANDS

AREA CODES The area code for all of the Cayman Islands is **345.**

BUSINESS HOURS Normally, banks are open Monday to Thursday from 9am to 2:30pm and Friday 9am to 1pm and 2:30 to 4:30pm. Most shops are open Monday to Saturday from 9am to 5pm, but hours can vary greatly.

DRINKING LAWS The legal drinking age is 18. Beer, wine, and liquor are sold at most grocery and convenience stores Monday to Saturday. It is legal to have an open container on the beach. Do not carry open containers of alcohol in your car or any public area that isn't zoned for alcohol consumption. The police can fine you on the spot. Don't even think about driving while intoxicated.

DRIVING RULES See "Getting There & Getting Around," p. 24.

DRUGSTORES If you're going to Little Cayman or Cayman Brac, don't depend on local outlets there to have the drugs or medication you need. Stock up before you go. On Grand Cayman the most convenient pharmacies are **Fosters Food Fair Pharmacy,** the Strand Shopping Centre on West Bay Road, Seven Mile Beach (✆ **345/945-7759**), open Monday to Saturday 7am to 10pm; and **Cayman Drug,** Kirk Freeport Centre, George Town (✆ **345/949-2597**), open Monday to Friday 9am to 5:30pm and Saturday 8:30am to 4pm.

ELECTRICITY Electricity on the Cayman Islands is 110-volt AC (60 cycles), so U.S. and Canadian appliances will not need adapters or transformers, but appliances from Europe, Australia, or New Zealand will require adapters and transformers.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES No nations maintain an embassy or consulate in the Cayman Islands.

EMERGENCIES On Grand Cayman dial ✆ **555** for an ambulance; ✆ **345/949-0241** for an air ambulance from Island Air; and ✆ **911** for police, fire, or medical emergencies. For emergency numbers on Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, see p. 157 and 174, respectively.

GASOLINE (PETROL) Stations charge about the same, ranging from CI$3 to CI$4 per gallon. Taxes are already included in the printed price. One U.S. gallon equals 3.8 liters or .85 imperial gallons. Also, see "Getting Around," p. 31.

ETIQUETTE & CUSTOMS You should pay attention to dress codes in the Cayman Islands, as it still remains a "proper" British crown colony, and its residents are often conservative in dress and manners. Avoid wearing bathing suits or scanty beachwear outside a beach area or cruise ship. Cover up in public areas, especially when walking and sightseeing on the streets of George Town. There are no nude beaches, and public nudity, including topless bathing, is strictly prohibited by law. Visitors will want to wear smart casual tropical resort wear at most restaurants. When attending church, "Sunday dress" is appropriate—that is, no shorts or T-shirts. Men don't have to wear ties, however. Avoid profanity in public—it is extremely frowned upon.

For business attire, concessions are made for the local climate. Open collars, white trousers, knit shirts, and blazers are, to an increasing degree, appropriate for business meetings. Punctuality is appreciated, even if the temptation exists for a more relaxed observation of "island time." Don't be surprised if some of the meeting planners suggest a fishing or snorkeling trip on a private boat.

HOLIDAYS Caymanians observe New Year's Day (Jan 1), National Heroes' Day (Jan 27), Ash Wednesday (Feb or Mar), Good Friday (Mar or Apr), Easter (Mar or Apr), Discovery Day (third week in May), Whitsunday (May or June), the Queen's Birthday (June), Constitution Day (July 7), Remembrance Day (second Mon in Nov), Christmas Day (Dec 25), and Boxing Day (Dec 26). For more information on holidays, see "Calendar of Events," p. 18.

HOSPITALS On Grand Cayman, **George Town Hospital** (✆ **345/949-8600**) lies south of George Town on Hospital Road (south of Smith Rd.). For hospitals and clinics on Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, see p. 157 and 174, respectively.

INSURANCE For information on traveler's insurance, trip cancellation insurance, and medical insurance while traveling, please visit **www.frommers.com/planning**. In general, if you can afford it, we always recommend that visitors take out travel insurance. For the most part, the Caymans are a safe destination. However, they attract thousands of scuba divers and, in spite of safety precautions, accidents do occur. Even if you're an adventurous traveler, any number of things can go wrong on a trip—lost luggage, trip cancellation, or a medical emergency, so consider the insurance for added protection.

INTERNET ACCESS Most large r esorts and hotels hav e I nternet access. You can also access the I nternet at **Café del S ol/Team Café,** located on Seven Mile Beach at the Marquee Cinema Shopping Centre on Lawrence Blvd. (✆ **345/946-2233;** www.cafedelsol.ky). Also, see "Staying Connected," p. 51.

LANGUAGE English is the official language of the islands.

LEGAL AID In such a small island countr y, ther e ar e no local resources for legal aid. You must hire a loyal lawyer, and be prepared to post some upfront money.

LOST & FOUND Be sure to tell all of y our credit card companies the minute you discover your wallet has been lost or stolen, and file a report at the near est police pr ecinct. Your cr edit car d company or insurer may require a police report number or record of the loss. Most credit card companies hav e an emergency toll-fr ee number to call if your card is lost or stolen; they may be able to wire you a cash advance immediately or deliv er an emergency cr edit car d in a day or two . **Visa**'s emergency number is ✆ **800/847-2911** or 410/581-9994. **American E xpress** car dholders and trav eler's-check holders should call ✆ **800/221-7282. MasterCard** holders should call ✆ **800/307-7309** or 636/722-7111. F or **other cr edit car ds,** call the toll-fr ee number directory at ✆ **800/555-1212.**

If y ou need emergency cash o ver the w eekend when all banks are closed, y ou can hav e money wir ed to y ou via **Western U nion** (✆ **800/325-6000;** www.westernunion.com).

MAIL Most mail takes fr om 2 to 7 days, if airmailed, to r each points between the Cayman Islands and the U.S. mainland. The Cayman Islands don't use postal or zip codes. The **main post office** in George Town lies at E dward S treet and Car dinal Avenue (✆ **345/949-2474**), betw een the R oyal B ank of Canada and the B ank of Nova Scotia. F or information on post offices on Cayman B rac and Little Cayman, see p. 158 and 174, respectively.

A postcard to the U nited States costs CI20¢. An airmail letter to the U.S. costs CI75¢ per half-ounce. Rates to E urope are CI80¢ per half-ounce for an airmail letter. Postcards to Canada, the U.K., A ustralia, and New Zealand range in price fr om CI20¢ to CI$1; airmail letters range fr om CI75¢ to CI$1 per ounce. I t's recommended that packages be sent b y F ederal E xpress or another trackable deliv ery service.

NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES Published daily, the *Caymanian Compass* is the most popular ne wspaper on Grand Cayman. The Friday edition is especially helpful because it lists current and upcoming events. Rival papers include *New Caymanian,* published every Friday,

and *Cayman Net News,* published Tuesday and Thursday. Available at most hotels, *What's Hot* is a free monthly magazine geared toward visitors. Copies of *The Miami Herald* and the *International Herald Tribune* are available at the big resorts and at most major newsstands in George Town.

PASSPORTS See "Entry Requirements," p. 21. Also, see www.frommers.com/planning for information on how to obtain a passport.

POLICE Call ✆ **911** if you need the police.

SMOKING Smoking is not regulated as carefully in the Cayman Islands as it is in certain cities of the U.S. However, most hotels, at least the big ones, set aside some rooms for nonsmokers. Restaurants often lack sections set aside for nonsmokers. When being shown to a table, inform the captain or waiter that you want a table as far away from the smoke as possible.

TAXES A government tourist tax of 10% is added to your hotel bill. A departure tax of CI$20 is collected when you leave the Caymans, and this tax is included in your plane fare. There is no tax on goods or services.

TELEPHONES For information on calling the Cayman Islands and placing international calls while there, see "Staying Connected," p. 51. Telephone, fax, and telex are offered by **Cable & Wireless** (✆ **345/949-7800**) at Anderson Square in George Town.

TIME U.S. Eastern Standard Time (EST) is in effect year-round; daylight saving time is not observed. Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) is 5 hours ahead of EST, so when it's noon in the Cayman Islands, it's 5pm in London (GMT) and 2am the next day in Sydney.

TIPPING Most restaurants add a 10% to 15% charge in lieu of tipping, so check your bill carefully. Hotels also often add a 10% service charge to your bill. Taxi drivers expect a 10% to 15% tip.

TOILETS Public restrooms are found along Seven Mile Beach on Grand Cayman. Public facilities can be found at most beaches, though they are few and far between and often unpleasant. Visitors usually use the facilities of the resorts, although you should technically be a guest or customer (you can always just purchase a soft drink or a bottle of water).

VISAS See "Entry Requirements," p. 21. Consult **www.caymanislands.ky** for additional visa information.

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS U.S. Dept. of State Travel Advisory: ✆ **202/647-5225** (manned 24 hr.); U.S. Passport Agency: ✆ **202/647-0518;** U.S. Centers for Disease Control International Traveler's Hotline: ✆ **404/332-4559.**

VISITOR INFORMATION Before you go, check out the **Cayman Islands Department of Tourism** website (**www.caymanislands.ky**), an extensive search engine designed to help you find information about accommodations, dining, shopping, watersports, and other travel services. You can also sign up for printed or e-mail brochures and book vacations directly on this site. Alternatively, write to the Cayman Department of Tourism at P.O. Box 67, George Town, Grand Cayman, B.W.I., or call the **Cayman Department of Tourism** at ✆ **345/949-0623.** It's located in the Pavilion Building on Cricket Square in George Town. Hours are Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 5pm.

In the **United States,** the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism maintains the following offices: 8300 NW 53rd St., Miami, FL 33166 (✆ **305/599-9033;** fax 305/599-3766); 30 N. LaSalle St., Ste. 1650, Chicago, IL 60602 (✆ **312/263-1750;** fax 312/263-1753); Two Memorial City Plaza, 820 Gessner, Ste. 1335, Houston, TX 77024 (✆ **713/461-1317;** fax 713/461-7409); 350 Fifth Ave., #1801, New York, NY 10118 (✆ **212/889-9009;** fax 212/889-9125).

In **Canada,** contact Cayman Islands, 2 Bloor St. West, Ste. 700, Toronto, ON M4W 3R1 (✆ **416/485-1550** or 800/263-5808; fax 416/972-5071).

In the **United Kingdom,** contact Cayman Islands, 6 Arlington St., London SW1A 1RE (✆ **0207/491-7771;** fax 0207/409-7773).

The **Cayman Islands Government** (**www.gov.ky**) website is full of important tourist and travel information, reports current local news, and features a community and sports calendar. **Destination Cayman** (**www.destination.ky**) is another great information source, including a Cayman business directory in addition to a visitor center with travel news and local forecasts, annual events, photographs, and much more.

Since the Cayman Islands are so small, very detailed maps are rarely a problem. All you'll need is the *Cayman Islands Travelers' Road & Dive Map,* which is free. This foldout map also includes good maps of Little Cayman and Cayman Brac if you're planning to visit these satellite islands. Car rental firms distribute this map, and it is available at hotels or condo rentals, even dive shops, tourist attractions, restaurants, and the Owen Roberts Airport.

WATER The water in the Cayman Islands is, for the most part, safe to drink. Two desalination plants on Grand Cayman supply good-quality purified tap water to the entire West End, including Seven Mile Beach. If you can determine that you're drinking desalinated water, then it's safe to drink. Just ask. Cayman Brac's desalination plant also supplies purified water to residents, but Little Cayman establishments have their own water systems. If your hotel on Little

Cayman relies on rainwater collected in cisterns, it's best to drink only bottled water. When checking into hotels, ask about the water source. Regardless of how fresh the water might appear, never take a drink from a river, spring, or stream.

2 AIRLINE, HOTEL & CAR RENTAL WEBSITES

MAJOR AIRLINES

Air Canada
www.aircanada.com

British Airways
www.britishairways.com

Air Jamaica
www.airjamaica.com

American Airlines
www.aa.com

Cayman Airways
www.caymanairways.com

Continental Airlines
www.continental.com

Delta Air Lines
www.delta.com

Northwest Airlines
www.nwa.com

US Airways
www.usairways.com

MAJOR HOTEL & MOTEL CHAINS

Best Western International
www.bestwestern.com

Comfort Inn
www.comfortinn.com

Marriott
www.marriott.com

Ritz-Carlton
www.ritzcarlton.com

Westin Hotels & Resorts
www.starwoodhotels.com/westin

CAR RENTAL AGENCIES

Avis
www.avis.com

Budget
www.budgetcayman.com

Cayman Auto Rentals
www.caymanautorentals.com.ky

Hertz
www.hertz.com

Thrifty
www.thrifty.com

INDEX

See also Accommodations and Restaurant indexes, below.

General Index

AARP, 45
A.A. Transportation, 33
Above and Beyond Tours, 44
Access-Able Travel Source, 44
Accessible Journeys, 45
Accommodations, 54–60. *See also* Accommodations Index
  best
    to get away from it all, 8–9
    for honeymoons and weddings, 8
    luxury hotels, 9–10
  Cayman Brac, 158–163
    guesthouse, 160
    major scuba-diving resorts, 158–160
    self-catering villas and apartments, 160–163
  condos, villas, and cottages, 54–56
  family-friendly, 67
  Grand Cayman, 61–78
    condos, villas, and cottages, 71–78
    hotels and resorts, 62–71
  hotels and resorts, 54
  landing the best room, 57–58
  Little Cayman, 175–179
  saving on, 56–57
  seasons, 17
  surfing for, 59–60
AFB (American Foundation for the Blind), 44
Air Ambulance Card, 44
Air Canada, 25
Airfares, tips for getting the best, 26–28
Airport security, 28
Air show, 20
AirTicketsDirect, 27
Air travel, 24–28
All-inclusive resorts and hotels, 57
Ambassador Divers, 113
American Airlines, 25
American Airlines Vacations, 49
American Express
  emergency number, 188
  traveler's checks, 39
American Express Travelers Cheque Card, 39
American Foundation for the Blind (AFB), 44
American Plan (AP), 57
Annual Batabano Carnival, 20
Antica Gelateria (Grand Cayman), 101, 153–154
AP (American Plan), 49
Apartment rentals (condo rentals)
  Cayman Brac, 160–163
  Grand Cayman, 71–78
Arabus Clothiers (Grand Cayman), 141
Area codes, 186
Art@Government House, 18
Art galleries, Grand Cayman, 138
Artifacts Ltd. (Grand Cayman), 146
Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO), 46
Atlantis Adventures, 2, 114–115
ATMs (automated teller machines), 36–38
  Cayman Brac, 157
Aunt Sha's Kitchen (Cayman Brac), 171
Australia
  customs regulations, 24
  green travel resources, 46
  health-related travel advice, 41
  passports, 22
  telephone calls to and from, 51

Avis, 32
Avis Rent a Car, 45

B*alboa* (wreck), 115
Banana orchid, 125
B & S Motor Ventures (Cayman Brac), 156, 157
Bar at Brac Reef Beach Resort (Cayman Brac), 171
Batabano (Grand Cayman), 135
Batabano Carnival, 20
Bat Cave (Cayman Brac), 169
Bayside Grocery (Cayman Brac), 170
Bayside Watersports, 116
The Beach Boutique (Grand Cayman), 141
Beach Club Colony Hotel & Dive Resort (Grand Cayman), 106
Beaches, 13, 105–107
  best, 3
  Cayman Brac, 165–166
  Little Cayman, 181
Beachwear, Grand Cayman, 139–140
Bernard K. Passman Gallery (Grand Cayman), 143
Beyond the Horizon (Grand Cayman), 142
Biking, 34, 48
  Cayman Brac, 157
  Little Cayman, 174
Bird-watching
  Grand Cayman, 117
  Little Cayman, 184
  Parrot Reserve (Cayman Brac), 168
"Blackbeard" (Edward Teach), 136
Bloody Bay Marine Park (Little Cayman), 7, 181
Bloody Bay Wall, 8
Blossom Village (Little Cayman), 172
Blue Tip (Grand Cayman), 117
The Bluff (Cayman Brac), 167
Boating and boat rentals
  Cayman Islands Million Dollar Run, 19
  Easter Regatta, 19
  Grand Cayman, 113–114
Boatswain's Beach/Cayman Turtle Farm (Grand Cayman), 119–120
Boat trips and tours, Grand Cayman, 109
Bodden Town (Grand Cayman), 129
Boggy Sand Road (Grand Cayman), 132, 134
Booby Pond (Little Cayman), 184
Booby Pond Visitor's Centre (Little Cayman), 184
The Book Nook (Grand Cayman), 140
Botanic Park, Queen Elizabeth II (Grand Cayman), 124, 131
Boutique Cartier (Grand Cayman), 144
Brac Freeport (Cayman Brac), 170
Brac Reef Beach Resort (Cayman Brac), 157–158
  tennis courts at, 170
Brac Rent-a-Car (Cayman Brac), 156
Brazilian Point (Grand Cayman), 139
Breakers (Grand Cayman), 130
Britannia Golf Club, 116
British Airways, 25
Bucket shops (consolidators), 27
Budget, 32
Bugs and bites, 40–41
Burton Ebanks (caterer), 92
Burtons Taxi Service, 33
Bush, Gladwyn (Miss Lassie), 139
Business hours, 186
Bus travel, 33–34
The Butterfly Farm (Grand Cayman), 124

Cable & Wireless, 52, 189
Cabs, 33
  from the airport, 26
  Cayman Brac, 156–157
Café del Sol/Team Café (Grand Cayman), 52, 188
Calendar of events, 18–21
***Cali* (wreck), 7, 115**
Camana Bay, 91
Cameras, 140
Canada
  customs regulations, 23
  green travel resources, 46
  health-related travel advice, 41

passports, 22
traveling to the Cayman Islands from, 25
visitor information in, 190
Captain Bryan's, 113
Captain Crosby's Watersports, 113
***Captain Keith Tibbetts* (wreck), 6–8, 166**
Captain Marvin's Watersports, 111, 113
Carbon offsetting, 47, 48–49
Carnival, Batabano, 20
Carnival Cruise Lines, 29–30
Car rentals, 32
Cayman Brac, 156
Little Cayman, 173
Car travel, 31–33
driving tours, Grand Cayman
George Town, 126–131
West Bay, 132–135
Cash machines (cashpoints), 37–38
Cayfest (The National Festival of the Arts), 19
***Cayman Aggressor IV,* 113**
Cayman Airways, 25, 156, 173
Cayman Auto Rentals, 32
Cayman Brac, 3, 155–171
accommodations, 158–163
guesthouse, 160
major scuba-diving resorts, 158–160
self-catering villas and apartments, 160–163
banks, 157
beaches, 165–166
brief description of, 16
getting around, 156–157
nightlife, 170–171
outdoor activities, 166–170
restaurants, 163–165
shopping, 170
traveling to, 156
visitor information, 156
Cayman Brac Clinic, 157
Cayman Brac Museum, 166
Cayman Brac Post Office, 158
Cayman Brac Tourist Office, 156
Cayman Cab Team, 135
Cayman Camera Ltd. (Grand Cayman), 140
Cayman Cycle Rentals, 34
Cayman Department of Tourism, 190
Cayman Drug (Grand Cayman), 186
***Caymanian Compass,* 147, 188**
Cayman International School, 91
Cayman Islands Department of Tourism, 110, 190
Cayman Islands Dollar, 34–36
Cayman Islands Government, 190
Cayman Islands International Aviation Week, 20
Cayman Islands Jazz Fest, 21
Cayman Islands Million Dollar Run, 19
Cayman Islands National Museum (Grand Cayman), 120, 122
The Cayman Islands Orchid Show, 19
Cayman Islands Pirates Week, 20
Cayman Islands Sailing Club, 114
Cayman Islands Tennis Club (Grand Cayman), 118
***Cayman Islands Travelers' Road & Dive Map,* 190**
Cayman Kai Beach Resort (Grand Cayman), 107
Cayman National Bank
Cayman Brac, 157
Little Cayman, 174
***Cayman Net News,* 189**
Cayman Sea Salt, 144
The Cayman Trench, 12
Cayman Turtle Farm (Grand Cayman), 2, 119–120, 134
Cayman Villas, 55–56
Cayman Weddings, 59
Cayman Windsurfing, 115
Celebrations, 59
Celebrity Cruises, 30
Cellphones, 51–52
Cemetery Beach, 7
Cemetery Reef (Grand Cayman), 107
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 42
Cheapflights.com, 26
Chief Secretary's Office, 58
Cigars, Cuban, 140
CITA Wet Fest, 20
Climate, 17–18
Colombian Emeralds International (Grand Cayman), 144

Columbus, Christopher, 12
Conch, 79–80
Conch Club Divers (Little Cayman), 182
Condo rentals (apartment rentals)
Cayman Brac, 160–163
Grand Cayman, 71–78
Connection kit, 53
Consolidators (bucket shops), 27
Continental Airlines, 25
Continental Airlines Vacations, 49
Continental Plan (CP), 57
***Convert,* HMS, 108**
Coral Isle Club (Cayman Brac), 171
Costa Cruises, 30–31
Cottages, 54–55
Grand Cayman, 71–78
Crafts, Grand Cayman, 143
Credit cards, 38
frequent-flier, 27
Crime, 42
The Cruise Company, 29
Cruise ships and lines, 28–31
Cruises Inc., 29
CruisesOnly, 29
Cuban products, Grand Cayman, 140
Currency and currency exchange, 34–36
Customs and Border Protection (CBP), 23
Customs regulations, 22–24

D&M (Cayman Brac), 157
Delta Air Lines, 25
Delta Vacations, 49
Dentists, Cayman Brac, 157
Departure tax, 21
Destination Cayman, 190
Devil's Grotto, 7
Digicel, 52
Dining, 13. *See also* Restaurants Index
best, 10–11
Cayman Brac, 163–165
Grand Cayman, 79–104
by cuisine, 81–83
family-friendly, 90
menu items, 79–81
Little Cayman, 179–180
Taste of Cayman, 20
Directory assistance, 51
Disabilities, travelers with, 44–45
Divers Alert Network, 42
Divers World Ltd. of Cayman (Grand Cayman), 141
Divetech, 109–110
Diving, 1, 105
best sites for, 3, 6
Cayman Brac, 166–167
resorts, 158
Grand Cayman, 107–113
gear, 141
International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame, 19
safety and security, 42
seasons, 18
Dolphin Discovery Grand Cayman, 122
Don Foster's Dive, 111
Drinking laws, 186
Driving tours
George Town (Grand Cayman), 126–131
West Bay (Grand Cayman), 132–135
Drugstores (pharmacies)
Cayman Brac, 158
Grand Cayman, 186
Little Cayman, 174

Earthfoot's Ecotours, 47–48
Easter Regatta, 19
Ecotours, 47–48
Eden Rock Diving Center, 3, 6, 110
Electricity, 186
Elite Transportation, 33
Elmslie Memorial Church (George Town), 120
Elo's Taxi (Cayman Brac), 157
E-mail access, 52–53
Emergencies
Cayman Brac, 157
Grand Cayman, 186
Little Cayman, 174
***Emerging Horizons* (magazine), 45**
Environmentally Friendly Hotels, 47
Escorted tours, 51
Etiquette and customs, 187
European Plan (EP), 57
Expedia, 26

Faith Hospital (Cayman Brac), 157, 174
Families with children, 45
accommodations, 67
restaurants, 90
Festivals and special events, 18–21
Fishing, 2
Cayman Brac, 167
Grand Cayman, 116
Little Cayman, 182–183
Fitness centers, Grand Cayman, 118
Fitness Connection (Grand Cayman), 118
Flights.com, 27
Flights International, 27
FlyerTalk, 28
Flying Wheels Travel, 45
Flying with Disability, 45
Fort George (George Town), 120
Foster's Food Fair (Grand Cayman), 141
Fosters Food Fair Pharmacy (Grand Cayman), 186
Four D's Car Rental (Cayman Brac), 156
Frank Sound (Grand Cayman), 130
Frequent-flier clubs, 27
Frequent-flier credit cards, 27
Frequent-stay programs, 57
Frommers.com, 48
Frommer's favorite experiences, 1–3

Galleria Plaza (Grand Cayman), 145–146
Gasoline, 187
Gas stations, 33
Gay.com Travel, 44
Gays and lesbians, 43–44
George Town (Grand Cayman), 120
driving tour, 126–131
George Town Hospital (Grand Cayman), 187
***Getting Married in the Cayman Islands* (brochure), 58**
Gifts and souvenirs, Grand Cayman, 141–142
Global ATM Alliance, 38
Golf, Grand Cayman, 116–117
Grand Canyon (White Stroke Canyon or 3-Bs Wall, Grand Cayman), 6
Grand Cayman
accommodations, 61–78
condos, villas, and cottages, 71–78
hotels and resorts, 62–71
average temperature and rainfall in, 18
brief description of, 16
nightlife, 147–154
bar/restaurant combos, 149–150
bars, 150–151
club scene, 147–148
pool hall bars, 153
pubs, 151–152
organized tours, 135–136
restaurants, 79–104
by cuisine, 81–83
family-friendly, 90
menu items, 79–81
shopping, 137–146
Grandma Julia's Beach (Grand Cayman), 134
Great Cave (Cayman Brac), 169
"Green" Hotels Association, 47
***Green Living* (magazine), 46**
Green travel, 46–49
GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications), 51
Gun Bay, 108
Gun Square (Bodden Town), 129
Guy Harvey's Gallery & Shoppe (Grand Cayman), 143
Gyms, Grand Cayman, 118

Handicrafts, Grand Cayman, 143
Harbour Place (Grand Cayman), 145
Hard Rock Cafe, 53
Harley Davidson of Grand Cayman, 142
The Harquail Theatre (Grand Cayman), 154
Hartford Holidays Travel, 29
Health concerns, 40–42
Health insurance, 41
Hell (Grand Cayman), 123, 134

The Heritage Crafts Shop (Grand Cayman), 143
Hertz, 32
Hideaways Aficionado, 56
High season, 17
Hiking
Cayman Brac, 167–168
Mastic Trail (Grand Cayman), 124–126
Hobbies and Books (Grand Cayman), 146
Holidays, 187
Holiday Taxi, 135
Holland America Line, 31
Honey Suckle Trail Rides (Grand Cayman), 118
Horse Back in Paradise with Nicki (Grand Cayman), 117
Horseback riding, Grand Cayman, 117–118
Hospitals and clinics
Cayman Brac, 157
Grand Cayman, 187
Little Cayman, 174
Hotel Association of Canada, 47
HotelChatter, 60
Hotels and resorts, 54–60. *See also* Accommodations Index
best
to get away from it all, 8–9
for honeymoons and weddings, 8
luxury hotels, 9–10
Cayman Brac, 158–163
guesthouse, 160
major scuba-diving resorts, 158–160
self-catering villas and apartments, 160–163
condos, villas, and cottages, 54–56
family-friendly, 67
Grand Cayman, 61–78
condos, villas, and cottages, 71–78
hotels and resorts, 62–71
hotels and resorts, 54
landing the best room, 57–58
Little Cayman, 175–179
saving on, 56–57
seasons, 17
surfing for, 59–60
Hotels.com, 59
HotelShark.com, 60
Hurricane season, 18
Hutland (Grand Cayman), 131

IAMAT (International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers), 42
Ice cream, Grand Cayman, 101, 153–154
IGLTA (International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association), 43–44
Indepth Watersports (Cayman Brac), 167
Indoor activities for inclement weather, 118
Inside Flyer, 28
Insurance, 187
International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers (IAMAT), 42
International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA), 43–44
International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame, 19
International Society of Travel Medicine, 42
Internet access, 52–53, 188
Cayman Brac, 157
Little Cayman, 174
InTouch USA, 52
Ireland, passports, 22

Japanese Gardens, 6
Jazz Fest, Cayman Islands, 21
Jewelry, Grand Cayman, 143–144
Jose's Service Center, 33
Julie's Wall, 6
Just-A-Vacation Inc., 50

Kayak.com, 27
Kayaking, Little Cayman, 183
Kelly Cruises, 29
Kennedy Gallery (Grand Cayman), 139
Kirk Freeport (Cayman Brac), 170
Kirk Freeport Plaza (Grand Cayman), 145

La Casa del Habano (Grand Cayman), 140
La Esperanza (Cayman Brac), 171
Language, 188
La Perfumerie I and II (Grand Cayman), 145
Lastminute.com, 27
Latitude 19 (Grand Cayman), 140
LCB Tours (Little Cayman), 183, 184
***Leeward,* ban of the, 43**
Legal aid, 188
The Lighthouse Trail (Cayman Brac), 168
Lime, 52
Limo buses, 33
Lingerie, Grand Cayman, 145
Little Cayman, 2, 172–185
accommodations, 175–179
beaches, 181
brief description of, 16–17
exploring, 184
getting around, 173–174
nightlife, 185
restaurants, 179–180
shopping, 185
traveling to, 173
visitor information, 173
Little Cayman Beach Resort
bus tours, 184
kayaking, 183
tennis courts at, 183
Little Cayman Clinic, 174
Little Cayman Mardi Gras Festival, 19
Little Cayman Museum, 184
Little Cayman Post Office, 174
Lodgings, 54–60. *See also* Accommodations Index
best
to get away from it all, 8–9
for honeymoons and weddings, 8
luxury hotels, 9–10
Cayman Brac, 158–163
guesthouse, 160
major scuba-diving resorts, 158–160
self-catering villas and apartments, 160–163
condos, villas, and cottages, 54–56
family-friendly, 67
Grand Cayman, 61–78
condos, villas, and cottages, 71–78
hotels and resorts, 62–71
hotels and resorts, 54
landing the best room, 57–58
Little Cayman, 175–179
saving on, 56–57
seasons, 17
surfing for, 59–60
Long, Charles, 138
Lost and found, 188

Mail, 188
Mann Travel and Cruises, 29
MAP (Modified American Plan), 49
Mardi Gras Festival, Little Cayman, 19
Marriages, 58–59
MasterCard
emergency number, 188
traveler's checks, 39
Mastic Trail (Grand Cayman), 1, 124–126, 131
The Maze, 6
McCurley's Tours, 33
McLaughlin Enterprises (Little Cayman), 173–174
Meagre Bay Pond (Grand Cayman), 130
Meal plans, 57
Medical insurance, 41
Medical requirements for entry, 24
MedjetAssist, 41
Mission House (Bodden Town), 129
Miss Lassie (Gladwyn Bush), 139
Mitzi's Fine Jewelry (Grand Cayman), 144
Mobility-Advisor.com, 45
Modified American Plan (MAP), 57
Money and costs, 34–39, 61
MossRehab, 44

National Festival of the Arts, The (Cayfest), 19
National Gallery of the Cayman Islands (Grand Cayman), 126
National Passport Information Center, 22

Nature Spa Health & Beauty (Little Cayman), 185
***Nautilus* (semi-submarine), 115**
***New Caymanian*, 188**
Newspapers and magazines, 188–189
New Zealand
customs regulations, 24
passports, 22
telephone calls to and from, 51
Nightlife
Cayman Brac, 170–171
Grand Cayman, 147–154
bar/restaurant combos, 149–150
bars, 150–151
club scene, 147–148
pool hall bars, 153
pubs, 151–152
Little Cayman, 185
North Sound Club (Grand Cayman), 116
Northwest Airlines, 25
Now, Voyager, 44

Ocean Frontiers Reef Resort, 110
Off season, 17
Off the Wall Divers, 111
Oh Boy Charters, 110–111
Olivia Cruises & Resorts, 44
Opodo, 27
Orbitz, 26
Orchid Show, Cayman Islands, 19
Outdoor activities (other than watersports), Grand Cayman, 116–118
Outfitters, Grand Cayman, 109–111, 113
Owen Island (off Little Cayman), 3, 181
Owen Roberts International Airport, 24–25, 53

Package deals, 49–50
Panton Square (George Town), 120
Paradise Divers (Little Cayman), 182
Parrot Reserve (Cayman Brac), 168
Passports, 21–22
Pedro St. James National Historic Site (Grand Cayman), 123, 129
Perfumes, Grand Cayman, 145
Peter's Cave (Cayman Brac), 168
Petrol, 187
Pharmacies (drugstores)
Cayman Brac, 158
Grand Cayman, 186
Little Cayman, 174
Pirates, 136
Pirate's Grotto (Grand Cayman), 143
Planning your trip, 12–60
accommodations, 54–60
entry requirements, 21–24
getting around, 31–34
health concerns, 40–42
money and costs, 34–39
packages for the independent traveler, 49–51
safety concerns, 42–43
specialized travel resources, 43–45
telephones and cellphones, 51–52
traveling to the Cayman Islands, 24–31
when to go, 17–18
Point of Sand (Little Cayman), 3, 181
Police, 189
Post office
Cayman Brac, 158
Grand Cayman, 188
Little Cayman, 174
Prescription medications, 40
Priceline.com, 27
Prospect (Grand Cayman), 126, 128
Pure Art (Grand Cayman), 142

Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park (Grand Cayman), 124, 131
Queen's Birthday, 20
Queen's Court Shopping Centre (Grand Cayman), 146
Quikbook, 59

Rainfall, average, 18
Rainy season, 18
Reality Tours, 135

Rebecca's Cave (Cayman Brac), 168
Red Sail Sports, 108–109
Reef Divers
Cayman Brac, 167
Little Cayman, 182
Reef Photo & Video Centre (Little Cayman), 185
Remembrance Day, 21
Responsible Travel, 46
Restaurants, 13. *See also* Restaurants Index
best, 10–11
Cayman Brac, 163–165
Grand Cayman, 79–104
by cuisine, 81–83
family-friendly, 90
menu items, 79–81
Little Cayman, 179–180
Taste of Cayman, 20
Roadpost, 52
Rum, 98
Rum and liqueurs, Grand Cayman, 145
Rum Company (Grand Cayman), 145
Rum Point (Grand Cayman), 3, 107, 131

Safety concerns, 42–43
Sam McCoy's Diving & Fishing Lodge (Little Cayman), 185
SATH (Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality), 44
Savannah (Grand Cayman), 128–129
Savannah Texaco (Grand Cayman), 33
Scooter rentals
Cayman Brac, 157
Grand Cayman, 34
Scuba diving, 1, 105
best sites for, 3, 6
Cayman Brac, 166–167
resorts, 158
Grand Cayman, 107–113
gear, 141
International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame, 19
safety and security, 42
seasons, 18
Seamen's Memorial (George Town), 120
Sea salt, Grand Cayman, 144
Seasons, 17
Sea turtles
Cayman Turtle Farm (Grand Cayman), 2, 119–120, 134
on menus, 79
***Seaworld Explorer* semi-submarine, 114–115**
Security Checkpoint Wait Times, 28
Seniors, 45
Seven Mile Beach (Grand Cayman), 2, 3, 7, 106, 132
Seven Mile Watersports, 111
Sharon's Hair Clinic (Cayman Brac), 170
Shellections (Grand Cayman), 142
Shipping your luggage, 26
Shopping
Cayman Brac, 170
Grand Cayman, 137–146
Little Cayman, 185
Shopping malls, Grand Cayman, 145
Sibley, Joanne, 138
SideStep.com, 27
Sights and attractions, Grand Cayman, 119–136
top four, 119–124
Silver Thatch Excursions, 136
Silver thatch palm, 125
SkyCap International, 26
Skype, 52
SmarterTravel.com, 27
Smith Cove (Grand Cayman), 126
Smith Cove Public Beach (Grand Cayman), 107
Smoking, 189
Snapper Hole, 6
Snorkeling, 2
best sites for, 7
Grand Cayman, 107–113, 126
gear, 141
Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality (SATH), 44
Southern Cross Club (Little Cayman), 182, 185
Special events and festivals, 18–21
Speed limit, 32–33
Spelunking, Cayman Brac, 168–169
Sports and outdoor activities, Grand Cayman, 116–118

Sports Express, 26
Spotts (Grand Cayman), 128
Stamps, Grand Cayman, 146
STA Travel, 27
Stevenson, Robert Louis, 136
Stingray City (Grand Cayman), 112
Stingrays, 1, 112
Submarine rides, Grand Cayman, 114–115
Submarine dives, 114–115
Sun exposure, 40
Sunset sails, 109
Sustainable tourism, 46–49
Sustainable Travel International, 46
SustainLane, 47

Tarpon Alley, 6
Taste of Cayman, 20
Taxes, 189
departure, 21
Taxis, 33
from the airport, 26
Cayman Brac, 156–157
Taxi tours, Grand Cayman, 135
TDMA (Time Division Multiple Access), 51
Teach, Edward ("Blackbeard"), 136
Telephones, 51–52, 189
Temperature, average, 18
Tennis
Cayman Brac, 170
Grand Cayman, 118
Little Cayman, 183
10 Sails, Wreck of the, 108, 129
Texas 7-Mile Beach Star Mart, 33
Thirsty Surfer, 52
Thrifty, 32
Time zone, 189
Tipping, 189
Toilets, 189
Top Drawer (Grand Cayman), 145
Tortuga Divers, 111
Tortuga Rum Cake Factory (Grand Cayman), 134
Tourism Concern, 46
Tourism For All, 45
Tourist information, 190
Cayman Brac, 156
Little Cayman, 173
Tours
Cayman Brac, 167
Grand Cayman, 135–136
TourScan Inc., 50
Toys, Grand Cayman, 146
Transportation, Cayman Brac, 156–157
Travelaxe, 59
Traveler's checks, 39
Travel Health Online, 42
Traveling to the Cayman Islands
by cruise ship, 28–31
by plane, 24–28
Travelocity, 26
Travelsupermarket, 26
Tread Lightly, 47
Treasure Chest (Cayman Brac), 170
***Treasure Island* (Stevenson), 136**
TripAdvisor.com, 60
Tropicana Tours, 135–136
Turtles, sea
Cayman Turtle Farm (Grand Cayman), 2, 119–120, 134
on menus, 79

United Kingdom
customs regulations, 23–24
green travel resources, 46
health-related travel advice, 41
passports, 22
telephone calls to and from, 51
traveling to the Cayman Islands from, 25–26
visitor information in, 190
United States
customs regulations, 23, 138
health-related travel advice, 41
passports, 21, 22, 42–43
telephone calls to and from, 51
traveling to the Cayman Islands from, 25
visitor information in, 190
US Airways, 25

Vacation rentals, 54–56. *See also* Apartment rentals; Villa rentals
Village of Breakers (Grand Cayman), 130
Village of Prospect (Grand Cayman), 126, 128

Village of Savannah (Grand Cayman), 128–129
Village of Spotts (Grand Cayman), 128
Village Square (Little Cayman), 185
Villa rentals, 54–56
Cayman Brac, 160–163
Grand Cayman, 71–78
Villas of Distinction (Grand Cayman), 56
Villas Pappagallo (Grand Cayman), 134–135
Visa
emergency number, 188
traveler's checks, 39
Visas, 22
Visitor information, 190
Cayman Brac, 156
Little Cayman, 173
Voice over Internet protocol (VoIP), 52
Volunteer International, 47
Vonage, 52

War Memorial (George Town), 120
Water, drinking, 190–191
Cayman Brac, 158
Little Cayman, 174
Watersports. ***See also specific sports***
CITA Wet Fest, 20
Watler Family Cemetery (Grand Cayman), 128
Weather, 17–18
Websites, 53
Weddings, 58–59
West Bay (Grand Cayman), driving tours, 132–135
West Bay Beach (Grand Cayman). ***See*** **Seven Mile Beach**
West End Point Overlook (Cayman Brac), 168
Westerly Ponds (Cayman Brac), 168
Western Union, 188
West Shore Shopping Centre (Grand Cayman), 146
Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, 47
What's Hot, **189**
Wi-Fi access, 53
Windsurfing, Grand Cayman, 107, 115
World Gym (Grand Cayman), 118

Accommodations

Almond Beach Hideaways (Cayman Brac), 160–161
The Anchorage (Grand Cayman), 77–78
Aqua Bay Club (Grand Cayman), 73–74
The Avalon Condominiums (Grand Cayman), 71–72
Beach Club Colony Hotel & Dive Resort (Grand Cayman), 66
The Beachcomber (Grand Cayman), 72
Beacon Harbor (Cayman Brac), 161
Brac Caribbean Beach Village (Cayman Brac), 158
Brac Reef Beach Resort (Cayman Brac), 158, 160
Carib Sands Beach Resort (Cayman Brac), 161
Cayman Breakers Condominiums (Cayman Brac), 162
Cayman Cottage (Cayman Brac), 162
Christopher Columbus (Grand Cayman), 78
The Club at Little Cayman, 175
Cobalt Coast Resort and Suites (Grand Cayman), 67–68
The Colonial Club (Grand Cayman), 72–73
Comfort Suites (Grand Cayman), 68
Conch Club Condominiums (Little Cayman), 175
The Discovery Point Club (Grand Cayman), 67, 74
Eldemire's Tropical Island Dive Inn (Grand Cayman), 71
Grand Cayman Beach Suites, 62
The Grand Caymanian Resort, 67, 68–69
Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort, 66
Island Pine Villas (Grand Cayman), 78
Lacovia Condominiums (Grand Cayman), 74–75

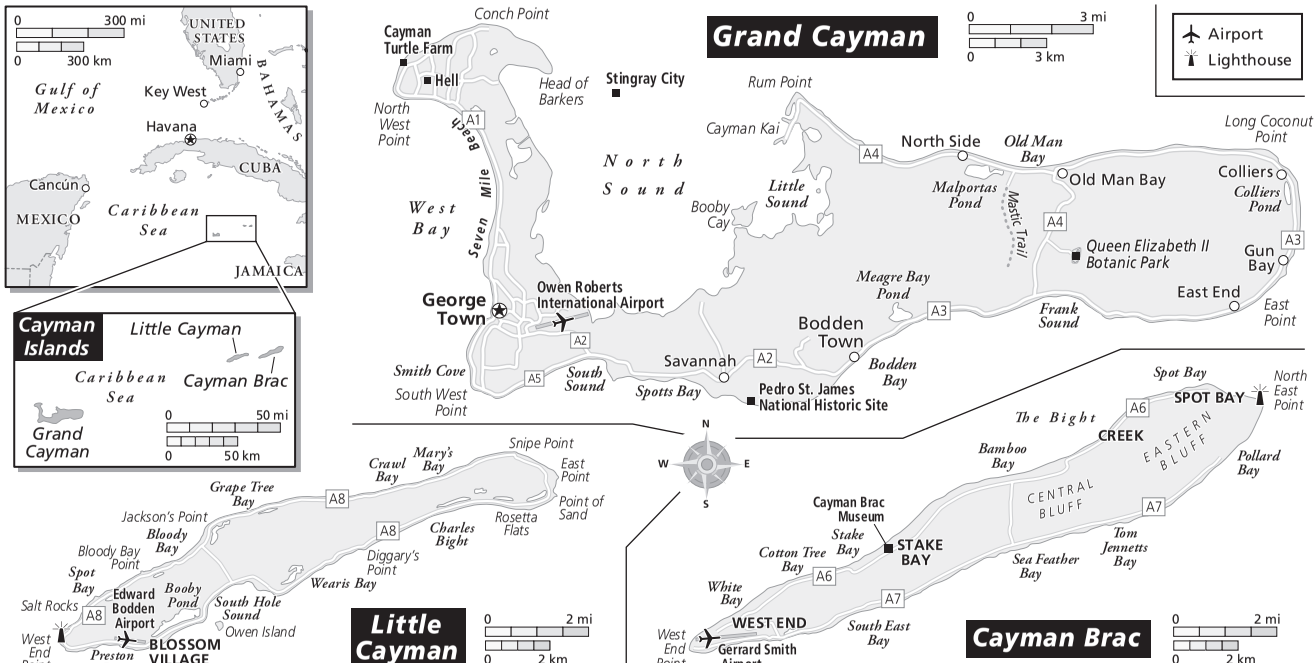
La Esperanza (Cayman Brac), 162–163
Lighthouse Point (Grand Cayman), 73
Little Cayman Beach Resort, 176
Little Cayman Cottage, 176
London House (Grand Cayman), 75
Morritt's Tortuga Club and Grand Resort (Grand Cayman), 75
Paradise Villas Resort (Little Cayman), 178
Pirates Point Resort, Ltd. (Little Cayman), 176, 178
The Reef Resort (Grand Cayman), 76
The Retreat at Rum Point (Grand Cayman), 76–77
The Ritz-Carlton (Grand Cayman), 62, 64
Rocky Shore Villas (Grand Cayman), 71
Sam McCoy's Diving & Fishing Lodge (Little Cayman), 178–179
Shangri-La B&B (Grand Cayman), 69
Silver Sands Condominiums (Grand Cayman), 67, 77
Southern Cross Club (Little Cayman), 179
Southern Cruz (Cayman Brac), 163
Sunset House (Grand Cayman), 69–70
Sunshine Suites Resort (Grand Cayman), 70
Turtle Nest Inn (Grand Cayman), 70
Villas of the Galleon (Grand Cayman), 67, 77
Walton's Mango Manor (Cayman Brac), 160
The Westin Casuarina Resort & Spa (Grand Cayman), 64

Restaurants

Al la Kebab (Grand Cayman), 99
AquaBeach Restaurant & Bar (Grand Cayman), 93
Aunt Sha's Kitchen (Cayman Brac), 164
Bacchus Restaurant and Wine Bar (Grand Cayman), 94
Biggie's (Cayman Brac), 163–164
Birds of Paradise (Little Cayman), 179
The Brasserie (Grand Cayman), 83
Breezes by the Bay (Grand Cayman), 94
The Brick House (Grand Cayman), 94–95
Britannia Restaurant (Grand Cayman), 116
Cafe Mediterraneo (Grand Cayman), 90, 95
Calypso Grill (Grand Cayman), 83–84
Captain's Table (Cayman Brac), 164
Casanova's (Grand Cayman), 84
Chicken! Chicken! (Grand Cayman), 90, 100
Cimboco Caribbean Cafe (Grand Cayman), 100
Corita's Copper Kettle (Grand Cayman), 100–101
The Cracked Conch/Macabuca Oceanside Tiki Bar & Grill (Grand Cayman), 84, 86
Deckers Grille & Lounge (Grand Cayman), 95–96
Edoardo's (Grand Cayman), 96
Full of Beans (Grand Cayman), 96–97
Gateway of India (Grand Cayman), 97
Grand Old House (Grand Cayman), 86
Hard Rock Cafe Cayman Islands (Grand Cayman), 101
Harry's Caribbean Bar & Grill (Grand Cayman), 101–102
Hemingway's (Grand Cayman), 87–88
The Hungry Iguana (Little Cayman), 180
Icoa Cafe (Grand Cayman), 102
Kaibo Beach Bar & Grill (Grand Cayman), 88
La Esperanza Restaurant (Cayman Brac), 164–165
The Lighthouse Restaurant at Breakers (Grand Cayman), 88, 130
Lobster Pot (Grand Cayman), 88, 90
Mezza (Grand Cayman), 102
Neptune's (Grand Cayman), 90

Over the Edge (Grand Cayman), 97
Pirates Point Resort Restaurant (Little Cayman), 180
Portofino Wreckview Restaurant (Grand Cayman), 90–91
Rackham's Pub & Restaurant (Grand Cayman), 98
The Reef Grill at Royal Palms (Grand Cayman), 91–92
Ristorante Pappagallo (Grand Cayman), 92
Ristorante Ragazzi (Grand Cayman), 98–99
Seaharvest Restaurant (Grand Cayman), 102–103
Seymour's Jerk Centre (Grand Cayman), 103
Thai Orchid (Grand Cayman), 99
Triple Crown (Grand Cayman), 103
Tropical Delight Restaurant (Cayman Brac), 165
Vivine's Kitchen (Grand Cayman), 103–104
The Wharf (Grand Cayman), 92–93
Wreck Bar & Grill (Grand Cayman), 131

NOTES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MEXICO
Caribbean Sea
JAMAICA
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Little Cayman
Caribbean Sea
Cayman Brac
Grand Cayman
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Grand Cayman
Conch Point
Cayman Turtle Farm
Hell
Head of Barkers
Stingray City
Rum Point
North West Point
Seven Mile Beach
A1
North Sound
Cayman Kai
North Side
Old Man Bay
Long Coconut Point
A4
Old Man Bay
Colliers
Colliers Pond
West Bay
Little Sound
Booby Cay
Malportas Pond
Mastic Trail
A4
Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park
Gun Bay
A3
Meagre Bay Pond
East End
East Point
George Town
Owen Roberts International Airport
A3
Frank Sound
Bodden Town
A2
Bodden Bay
Smith Cove
A5
South Sound
Savannah
A2
South West Point
Spotts Bay
Pedro St. James National Historic Site
0 3 mi
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Airport
Lighthouse
N
W
E
S
Spot Bay
North East Point
SPOT BAY
The Bight
A6
CREEK
EASTERN BLUFF
Bamboo Bay
Pollard Bay
CENTRAL BLUFF
A7
Cayman Brac Museum
Stake Bay
STAKE BAY
Cotton Tree Bay
A6
Tom Jennetts Bay
Sea Feather Bay
White Bay
A7
WEST END
South East Bay
West End Point
Gerrard Smith Airport
Cayman Brac
0 2 mi
0 2 km
Snipe Point
Crawl Bay
Mary's Bay
East Point
Grape Tree Bay
A8
Point of Sand
Jackson's Point
Bloody Bay
Charles Bight
Rosetta Flats
Bloody Bay Point
A8
Diggary's Point
Spot Bay
Booby Pond
Wearis Bay
Salt Rocks
A8
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